Provincial Grand Lodge & Provincial Grand Chapter of Northumberland

Second Rising

Issue 6, November 2026

Take Notice Edition



Editorial

Take Notice

by Bro Stephen Frost

Over the course of this year, Second Rising has used the Five Ways to Wellbeing as a way of looking at Freemasonry across Northumberland. Take Notice feels like the right place to finish, because it asks us to do something slightly different. Not to add anything new, but to pay better attention to what is already there.

That sounds simple enough. In practice, familiarity has a habit of making things invisible.

Freemasonry is full of things we stop noticing once we have been around for a while. We know the layout of the Lodge room, the rhythm of a meeting, the language and the little customs that nobody quite remembers learning. We know what happens next. More importantly, we can forget how unfamiliar all of that once seemed to us, and how it might look to a new Brother or Companion trying to make sense of it for the first time.

That is one of the interesting ideas to come out of Tony Harvey's recent visit to Duke of Connaught Lodge, featured later in this issue. Sometimes taking notice means looking again at something we think we already understand. The words may be familiar, the surroundings recognisable and the ceremony one we have witnessed many times before. What changes is our perspective when we try to see it through somebody else's eyes.

Not every story in this issue needs to be bent around the theme, and I would rather not pretend otherwise. But several fit without any help from us.

Ian Glendinning's piece on Northumberland's red squirrels turns our attention quite literally to the world around us and to something worth protecting on our own doorstep. Square & Compasses asks us to look again at the skills and experience sitting within our own membership, and consider where a little of our time might open opportunities for young people through Scouting. Our Festival pages make a quieter point: something small enough to be barely noticeable to the person giving it can be very noticeable indeed to the person whose life it helps.

There is a personal side to this as well. Most of us are very good at getting through things. Work, family, emails, meetings, the next job, the next commitment. Taking notice interrupts that occasionally. It means being properly present in a conversation rather than simply waiting to speak. It means noticing when somebody has gone quiet, when a familiar face has stopped appearing, or when somebody has been quietly doing good work without much recognition. Sometimes it means spotting a problem. Sometimes an opportunity. Sometimes it is simply appreciating what is already there.

Freemasonry gives us plenty of opportunities to practise that, although simply belonging to a Lodge or Chapter doesn't guarantee we make the most of them. It still comes down to what we do, how we treat one another and whether we're prepared to notice when something isn't working. Our ceremonies require attention, of course, but perhaps the more interesting test begins when the ceremony ends: how well we listen at the Festive Board, who we make room for, whether we notice an absence, and whether our Lodges and Chapters pay attention to the communities around them.

That, for me, is where the Five Ways have proved useful this year. They have given us a modern way of describing some of the things Freemasonry has been doing for generations, often without recognising them as such. Not proof that Freemasonry is somehow better than other organisations, but a useful reminder of what it can offer when we get it right.

This issue brings the formal Five Ways sequence to an end. I am not suggesting we start it all over again in January under a different heading. But I would be genuinely interested to know whether you have found the idea useful, and whether you would like Second Rising to retain a quieter Five Ways thread in future editions, used where it fits naturally rather than imposed as a theme.

If you have a view, tell us.

And in the meantime, take notice. There is usually more going on around us than we think.

The Difference Between Looking and Seeing

by W Bro Sumer Sardag

Of the Five Ways to Wellbeing, Take Notice encourages us to pause, observe and reflect on the world around us. For Freemasons, these are familiar ideas, woven into our teachings and the lessons we encounter throughout our Masonic journey.

Lately, I have been trying to practise this more consciously in my own life, particularly on my walks. I try to pause and really see what I am looking at. It sounds simple, but there is a difference between looking and seeing. Looking tells us what is there. Seeing asks us to give it our attention.

The Lesson of the Square and Compasses

When we look at our symbols, we do not merely see shapes of metal. We take notice of what they represent: the square as our guide to right action, and the compasses teaching us to keep our desires within due bounds. Together, they invite us to consider the balance between our actions and our impulses.

Their meaning deepens when we pause to ask how we are applying those lessons in our lives. A familiar symbol, like a familiar path, can still offer something new. Sometimes it is our attention that has changed.

Seeing the Small Things

In our daily lives, it is easy to rush from task to task, barely lifting our heads. Taking Notice invites us to slow down and appreciate the beauty of a sunrise, the changing of the seasons or the calm of a quiet moment.

On a recent walk through Ponteland Park, it was the changing leaves that caught my attention. On another occasion, sitting on a garden swing, I found myself looking up at the sky and simply staying with the moment. Nothing extraordinary had happened, yet there was something worth appreciating.

Some of these moments have found their way into the photographs and reflections I share. Writing about them encourages me to linger a little longer, to ask what caught my eye and why it stayed with me.

These small details ground us. They remind us that while we plan and build, life is also happening around us, quietly offering things we might otherwise miss.

Observing Ourselves

Perhaps the most important kind of noticing, however, is the one we turn inward.

Freemasonry teaches us to be honest with ourselves, to examine our thoughts, our actions and our motives. Am I being fair? Am I speaking kindly? Am I acting with integrity?

My walks often give me the space to consider such questions. As I become more attentive to my surroundings, I also become more aware of what I am carrying within me: a worry, a hope or a thought that needs a little patience before it becomes clear.

Taking Notice means keeping a careful watch over our own hearts and minds. It is how we recognise where we have grown and where we still have work to do. Self-knowledge is the foundation stone of all true improvement.

Noticing Our Brethren

The attention we give to a changing landscape can also be given to a familiar face.

We may notice an empty chair in the Lodge, but do we pause to think about the Brother who usually occupies it? We may ask, “How are you?” but do we give ourselves time to listen to the answer?

Taking notice of one another, and acting on what we notice, is one of the simplest ways we can demonstrate the friendship and care at the heart of Freemasonry.

The Great Pattern

Our teachings invite us to reflect on order, harmony and our place within the wider creation. When we take notice, we begin to recognise connections between what we believe and how we act, and between our own wellbeing and the care we offer others.

I am learning that I do not always need to travel somewhere new to discover something worth sharing. Sometimes, on a familiar walk, all I need to do is pause.

So, Brethren, let us keep our eyes open and our hearts attentive. Let us take notice of the world around us, the work within us and the Brethren beside us.

We may find that the light we seek is already there, waiting for our attention.

Take Notice: Seeing Freemasonry Through Fresh Eyes



On Thursday 1 October, Duke of Connaught Lodge No. 3892 hosted a special evening on behalf of Northumberland Light Blues at Fern Avenue Masonic Hall, welcoming W Bro Tony Harvey for an exploration of the Masonic journey.

Alongside the friendship and fellowship of the meeting, those attending enjoyed live music from Charlie Hetherington, with pipes and drums courtesy of Bros Robert Reavley and Isaac Leese. Duke of Connaught Lodge donated £50 to Tony's 2012 Prestonian Charity Fund, with Terry Christie matching it, bringing the total to £100.

Tony, a Prestonian Lecturer, author and a familiar voice on Masonic development, had been invited to consider a question particularly relevant to newer members: "What does Freemasonry have in store for me?"

Tony prefers to talk about newer Masons rather than young Masons. Someone can join at 25, 45 or 65 and still find an unfamiliar organisation, its customs and, perhaps most bewilderingly, its language. Passing. Raising. Festive Board. Province. Relief Chest. Grand Officer. Jewel. Firing. Ordinary words to established members; considerably less obvious to somebody recently through the door.

Those who have been around for a while acquire what might be called Masonic unconscious competence. We know where to stand, when to sit, what the initials mean and why certain aprons seem important. Eventually we stop noticing the things that once puzzled us. The newest member has not.

More than one route

Tony explored the many routes that can open up during a Masonic journey: the Craft degrees and Royal Arch, progressive offices, ritual, charity, mentoring, membership, communications, education, social activities, visiting and the less visible jobs keeping Lodges and halls functioning.

The important point was that there is no single correct route. Members arrive with different talents, interests, pressures and expectations. A man who enjoys speaking might develop a love of ritual. Another might dislike memorising pages but possess precisely the skills his Lodge needs in finance, administration or welfare. We need to notice the person rather than merely the vacancy.

One telling exchange concerned a member who described himself as "just a Steward". Tony challenged that "just". A Steward serves others, meets Brethren and learns how the Lodge works without immediately taking on a heavy burden. He suggested newer members might also spend time

assisting continuing officers, such as the Secretary, Membership Officer or Almoner, effectively trying out a role before deciding where their interests lie.

Share the work



A lively discussion turned to ritual. In some Lodges, delivering a whole ceremony from memory is regarded as a rite of passage. Tony questioned whether this necessarily gives either the speaker or the candidate the best experience. His preference is to share the work: smaller pieces learned properly, practised, coached and delivered confidently, giving more members the opportunity to participate.

He was clear that handing somebody a ritual book and expecting them to get on with it is not enough. Coaching, encouragement and one-to-one support matter. Freemasonry should challenge us, but challenge and unnecessary pressure are not the same thing.

Likewise, members may be balancing work, children, caring responsibilities and finances. Lodges should take notice of those pressures rather than assume past expectations fit everybody today. The meaning of Freemasonry need not change simply because the way we organise ourselves evolves.

Tony also warned about “Masonic indigestion”: the point at which an enjoyable interest becomes an ever-growing diary of offices, meetings and obligations. Taking notice applies to ourselves as well as others. Are we still enjoying it? Are we leaving enough time for family and other responsibilities? Sometimes the wisest decision is not to take on something else.

Seeing what is already there

Before reaching for another initiative or committee, perhaps we could become better at noticing: the Entered Apprentice lost in unfamiliar language; the Steward whose skills have not been asked about; the Brother quietly struggling with ritual; the member whose family commitments affect his availability; and the experienced officer who might welcome the chance to hand over responsibility.

But taking notice is not only about problems. It is also about appreciating what already works: friendship, laughter, visits, quiet support, the nervous candidate becoming part of the Lodge, and the striking contribution of music and fellowship to an evening such as this.

Tony described the Masonic journey as something capable of breadth as well as depth, with twists, turns and occasional rerouting. Our job need not be to determine somebody else’s route, but to pay enough attention to help him discover it.

Taking Notice of Northumberland's Red Squirrels

by W Bros Gareth Marijt and Ian Glendinning



Photograph: W Bro Gareth Marijt

On 22 August 2026, brethren from across the Province, together with wives and partners, visited the Hepple Whitefield Estate in Northumberland to see the work being done to protect one of the county's most iconic residents: the red squirrel.

The visit was arranged by W Bro Ian Glendinning of Coquetdale Lodge No. 5122, Chair of the Coquetdale Red Squirrel Group. Guests were welcomed to the estate by Ian and its owner, Sir Walter Riddell.

The group heard how the estate is being returned to a more natural state while operating as a working farm. Cattle and pigs range freely while ponies graze across the estate, creating an environment in which farming and conservation work alongside one another.

The Coquetdale Red Squirrel Group works closely with estate staff to protect the local red squirrel population, including by controlling invasive grey squirrels. Its work extends further, through collaboration with organisations including the National Innovation Centre for Data Science, Newcastle, Derby and Greenwich Universities, Northumberland College at Kirkley Hall and the Zoological Society of London.

One research project has supplied grey squirrels from the relatively pollution-free Upper Coquet Valley to help establish a baseline for studies into heavy metals in brain tissue, compared with animals from urban areas as researchers investigate possible associations with neurological illness in humans.



Working with Newcastle University, the group has also been involved in developing artificial intelligence capable of distinguishing red and grey squirrels. The technology could eventually be useful in trapping and, if available, targeted fertility control of grey squirrels.

Visitors saw practical population monitoring, including a camouflaged hide overlooking a feeding station with CCTV connected through the mobile phone network. They learned to identify signs of red squirrels from stripped cones and the distinctive way hazelnuts are opened.

Hepple is also home to the distillery behind Hepple Gin. Sir Walter gave a tour and explained its production methods, with an opportunity to purchase estate produce. The day concluded with a buffet lunch at the Star Inn in Harbottle.

The Coquetdale Red Squirrel Group thanks the brethren of Northumberland and Provincial Grand Lodge for their continued interest and support.

Square & Compasses: Could You Help Shape a Young Person's Future?



Think back to your childhood. Perhaps a teacher, coach, Scout Leader or another adult gave up their time to encourage you, teach you something new or help you discover an ability you never knew you had. Their influence may have stayed with you. That is what Scouting can offer young people every week.

Through camping, adventurous activities, teamwork and community projects, Scouting helps young people develop confidence, independence, resilience and practical skills. Behind these opportunities are volunteers who have chosen to give their time.

Bringing Freemasonry and Scouting together

W Bro Tony Harvey, who recently visited Duke of Connaught Lodge No. 3892, has championed the relationship for many years. He delivered the 2012 Prestonian Lecture, Scouting & Freemasonry: Two Parallel Organisations?, and now serves as The Scouts' UK Liaison with Freemasonry and leads the Square & Compasses National Support Team.

The initiative offers a route for Freemasons and their partners to support Scouting, nationally or locally, without necessarily committing to weekly youth leadership.

You don't have to be a Scout Leader

A successful Scout Group or District needs much more than people leading weekly meetings. It needs Trustees and Treasurers; help with finance, accounts, governance, administration and communications; people with knowledge of property, fundraising and IT; and volunteers willing to organise or support occasional events.

Others may be able to support adventurous activities: camping, hillwalking, kayaking, archery, target shooting or climbing, subject to the necessary experience, training and qualifications. Specialist advice or a few hours occasionally can be valuable too.

An opportunity here in Northumberland

As someone involved in Tynemouth District Scouts, I see both the benefits of Scouting and the pressure on the volunteers trying to deliver it. There is a huge amount of experience among Northumberland Freemasons: accountants, engineers, tradespeople, administrators, business owners, outdoor enthusiasts and retired professionals.

Imagine the opportunities that even a small number of those Brethren could help create if they were prepared to contribute a little time. We could strengthen Groups, help existing volunteers and support new activities for young people.

This is not an appeal for money. It is an appeal for something arguably more valuable: time, experience and willingness to help.

Could you spare a little time?

You need not have volunteered with Scouts before or commit to anything just to find out more. If you might be willing to help, regularly or occasionally, I'd welcome a conversation. Register your interest in Square & Compasses at bit.ly/SquareAndCompasses, or email stephen.frost@pgln.org.uk with a little about your skills and interests.

A little of your time could make a lifetime of difference to a young person.

From the Caledonian Canal to the Scout Rifle Range



Sometimes the effect of Masonic generosity takes a little time to become visible. A fundraising challenge undertaken earlier this year has helped create new opportunities for young people in North Tyneside.

On Saturday 10 October, Tynemouth District Scouts held an air rifle taster session at 6th Tynemouth Scout HQ, giving young people the opportunity to experience target shooting using equipment purchased with support from local Freemasons.

The story began with a sponsored kayaking challenge along the Caledonian Canal. The 60-mile journey from Fort William to Inverness raised funds for adventurous activities within Tynemouth District Scouts.

St Alban Lodge No. 5322 contributed £1,000 to the campaign, helping take the fundraising total beyond the £1,325 threshold required to unlock Sport England match funding.



That support has helped the District purchase new air rifles and develop its target sports provision. The October session was a chance to put the equipment to use and give young people an opportunity to learn new skills in a supervised activity.

A donation becomes equipment; the equipment helps make an activity possible. The final ingredient is volunteers willing to organise, supervise and maintain it. For Brethren interested in offering practical support, our accompanying Square & Compasses feature explains how to get involved.

Taking Aim: Province-Wide Clay Shoot Brings Brethren Together



Freemasonry does not have to stop when the Lodge room closes. Across Northumberland, individuals, Lodges and groups such as Northumberland Light Blues have been creating opportunities for members to meet away from formal meetings, from sea fishing and hillwalking to golf.

The latest addition came courtesy of Gavin Wales of John Page Lodge No. 3619, who organised a clay shooting morning open to members across the Province at Steve Smith's Shooting Ground.

Brethren of different ages, Lodges and shooting experience were split randomly into two groups, giving everyone a chance to meet people they might otherwise only pass briefly on Provincial visits.

Each shooter faced 24 targets, with one point for each successful shot. At the end everyone had one attempt at a final target worth three bonus points, and it proved decisive.



Darryl Hall of St Wilfrid Lodge No. 5439 scored 19 plus the three-point bonus to win with 22. Steve Frost of St Alban Lodge No. 5322 finished second on 20 and Garrom Dury of John Page Lodge No. 3619 was third on 19.

More important than the scores was the chance to have the craic, make connections and enjoy a relaxed morning without a meeting agenda. Those attending agreed it would be good to see more Province-wide social activities of this kind.

And with a little competitive spirit developing, perhaps Durham Province might fancy its chances. Twenty-two points is the score to beat.

From Hexham to the World Stage: Gold and Glory for Young Rowers



Two talented young rowers from Hexham Rowing Club represented Great Britain at the 2026 World Rowing Beach Sprint Finals in Qingdao, China, with Emma Nicholson returning as a World Champion and Jacob Lloyd reaching the knockout stages.

Both athletes received £2,000 grants from the Richard Henry Holmes Masonic Benevolent Fund in 2024, helping them meet the considerable costs of competitive rowing. Both were presented with their cheques by the Provincial Grand Master at the same event at Hexham Masonic Hall, ahead of a meeting of Epicure Lodge.

Emma Nicholson Strikes Gold

Emma Nicholson partnered Lexi Gill of Poole Amateur Rowing Club in the Under-19 Women's Double Sculls, becoming World Champions after a remarkable series of performances.



Photograph: @balintczucz

The pair topped the opening time trial, defeated the United States in the quarter-finals and France in the semi-finals, then faced host nation China in the final. They took an early lead and maintained their advantage to win by eight seconds.

For Emma, it was the culmination of considerable dedication. Having narrowly missed out on a medal the previous year, she returned determined to go further. Her season also included success in the Junior Women's category of the Four Nations Coastal Sculling Series and a trip to the European Championships in Spain in September.

Her mother explained just how valuable the Masonic grant had been: "Honestly Dave that money made such a difference." She said it covered most of the costs of the European Championships, making the later journey to China considerably easier to fund.

It is a reminder that behind international sporting achievements are families making substantial financial commitments, and that practical assistance can help young athletes take opportunities that might otherwise prove difficult to afford.

Jacob Lloyd Takes on the World's Best

Jacob Lloyd competed alongside Elyssa Stoker of City of Sunderland Rowing Club in the Under-19 Mixed Double Sculls.

Before reaching the world stage, he had won bronze at the Junior Inter Regional Regatta, finished eighth at the National Schools Regatta and claimed gold at the Junior British Championships, setting a course record. He was also part of the Tynedale Sports Awards 2023 Youth Team of the Year and a crew shortlisted for the British Rowing Awards as Youth Crew of the Year.



Both Jacob and Emma received the British Rowing Diploma in Sporting Excellence, reflecting their potential and commitment to the sport.

Jacob trained regularly at the Beach Sprint Rowing Academy in South Shields, progressing through national squads to secure selection for Great Britain.

In Qingdao, Jacob and Elyssa progressed through the time trials into the knockout stages, where they faced Spain in the Last 16. They made a strong start, but heavy waves made it difficult to match the Spanish crew, who established a lead that proved decisive.

Competing at a World Championship and reaching the knockout rounds was another significant step in Jacob's sporting development.

In his own message of thanks, Jacob wrote: "The funding I have received has been a big help to getting me to take part in these opportunities."

Supporting the Next Generation



Photograph: @balintczucz

Beach sprint rowing combines technical rowing ability with running on sand and challenging surf conditions. It is due to make its Olympic debut at Los Angeles 2028.

Equipment, coaching, training and travel can place considerable demands on athletes and their families. The Richard Henry Holmes Masonic Benevolent Fund's two £2,000 awards in 2024 have helped Emma and Jacob pursue their ambitions, with both representing Great Britain on the world stage and Emma returning home with a gold medal.

Congratulations to Emma, Jacob and their crewmates Lexi Gill and Elyssa Stoker. We look forward to following their continued progress.

With thanks to W Bro David Southern.

W Bro Paul Akshay Handa: 40 Years in the Craft



At Shiremoor Masonic Building, members of Vanbrugh Lodge No. 8412 welcomed back W Bro Paul Akshay Handa following a period of illness. His return was greeted warmly by 48 Brethren from Northumberland and Durham.

The meeting featured a triple Second Degree ceremony conducted by W Bro Mark Brooks. Following the ceremony, W Bro Cushy Butterfield represented the Province in presenting the three newly passed Fellow Crafts with Provincial booklets.

A highlight was the presentation of a certificate to W Bro Paul Handa marking 40 years of service to the Craft, recognising his contribution and commitment. Celebrations continued at the Festive Board, where W Bro Mark Brooks, on behalf of Vanbrugh Lodge's membership, presented Paul with a token of gratitude and esteem.

It was an evening which combined the ceremony and the pleasure of welcoming a respected Brother back among his friends.

With thanks to W Bros Jeff Bell, Mark Brooks and Damian Adams.

Prudhoe Castle Lodge: 75 Years and a New Beginning

From a chance conversation on a flooded road to a thriving gaming venue in a former cinema, Prudhoe Castle Lodge No. 7065 has a remarkable story to tell. As it celebrates its 75th anniversary, its members are demonstrating that preserving a Masonic heritage and embracing new ideas need not be competing ambitions.



The story of Prudhoe Castle Lodge begins, appropriately enough, with a group of Freemasons wondering whether there might be a better way of doing things.

On a cold, wet evening in 1949, four Brethren were returning to Prudhoe from a Lodge meeting in Wylam when their car became stranded in floodwater. The experience prompted a conversation about the possibility of establishing a Lodge closer to home.

On 4 April 1950, a group of prospective founders gathered at the Dr Syntax Hotel in Prudhoe. Just over a year later, on 16 April 1951, Prudhoe Castle Lodge No. 7065 was consecrated, sponsored by Vindobala Lodge.

The new Lodge proved extraordinarily popular. Within five years, 56 candidates had been initiated and another twelve members had joined. At one point, membership exceeded 120, with a substantial waiting list and increasingly limited space at the Dr Syntax.



The solution was ambitious. Members established a building fund, organised social events and raised £3,000. On 19 March 1959, they purchased the former Cosy Cinema in Mickley, creating an opportunity to establish a permanent Masonic home.

Converting the cinema was no small undertaking. Members personally guaranteed loans, carried out improvements and overcame various unexpected difficulties. Among them was a covenant dating from the site's earlier use as a Methodist chapel, which prohibited alcohol. A payment of £250 was eventually required to remove the restriction and permit the customary festive boards.

The first Lodge meetings were held in the converted building in February 1960.

Over the following decades, the Hall became home to several Craft Lodges and other Masonic orders. The Prudhoe Masonic Hall Company was established in 1976, and further improvements followed as generations of Brethren invested in the building.

But, as with many Masonic buildings, changing circumstances eventually brought financial pressures.

A difficult decision

By 2025, the number of Masonic bodies meeting at Mickley had declined considerably, and the financial position of the building had become increasingly challenging.

The insolvency of the existing tenant brought matters to a head. Members faced a difficult choice between retaining the building and accepting an alternative proposal that would see the Lodge move to Wylam.

A majority voted to remain in Mickley and support a proposal from four fellow Lodge members who had established a tabletop gaming business called Red October Games.

The decision was not without consequences. Six members subsequently resigned, including the Worshipful Master, Treasurer and Junior Warden, leaving significant vacancies and additional responsibilities for those who remained.

What followed was a determined collective effort to keep the Lodge functioning.

Joining members Jeff Hird and Alan Douglas stepped forward to fill important offices, while Peter Phazey, George Henderson, Malcolm Lowery and other Brethren helped maintain the Lodge's ceremonial work. Tyla Fearon subsequently took on the role of Junior Warden, while Light Blue Liam Culkin assumed the duties of Almoner.

Their efforts meant that Lodge meetings and ceremonies could continue despite a particularly difficult period.

Secretary Bob Bennie is keen that these contributions should not be overlooked. The decision to remain in Mickley was only the beginning. It was the willingness of individual Brethren to take responsibility and support one another that enabled the Lodge to move forward.

Enter Red October

While the Lodge was working to secure its future, something rather different was taking shape in the former cinema.



Red October Games was the idea of Bro Tyla Fearon, who established the business with three fellow members of Prudhoe Castle Lodge. All four shared an enthusiasm for tabletop gaming and saw an opportunity to create a venue offering far more than somewhere to purchase games and accessories.

The business initially operated from the building under the previous tenant. When that arrangement became unsustainable, the four members proposed taking on responsibility for the premises themselves.

A new lease was signed on 9 December 2025.

Under the arrangement, Red October takes responsibility for the building's running costs and maintenance while providing a commercial income for the Masonic Hall.

Speaking during a visit to the venue, Tyla explained that the founders had undertaken considerable research before launching the business, studying other gaming venues and working out what would be needed to make the venture sustainable.

Even so, the response exceeded their expectations. According to Tyla, Red October took more than £2,000 on its opening day and has continued to develop its activities and customer base.

Today, the main hall accommodates extensive tabletop gaming facilities, organised tournaments, retail displays and social events. Regular pub quizzes have also proved popular, while gaming enthusiasts travel from across the North East and further afield to attend events.

Visitors have come from as far away as Scotland, Yorkshire and overseas.

The business has also invested in the premises. Tyla estimates that around £12,500 has already been spent on improvements, including work to doors, electrical installations and security.

The aim is not simply to operate a successful gaming venue, but to make better use of a substantial building that might otherwise remain empty for much of the week.

And there is another benefit.

Opening doors

For Tyla, Red October and Freemasonry share something important: both provide opportunities for people to meet, build friendships and become part of a community.

Many visitors arrive knowing little about Freemasonry, despite spending time in a building owned by Freemasons. Conversations about the Lodge arise naturally, allowing members to explain what they do and challenge some of the misconceptions surrounding the organisation.

The connection is already producing tangible results.

Prudhoe Castle Lodge has initiated seven candidates over the past three years, with further interest in membership. Some of that interest has developed through Red October itself.

Tyla is particularly enthusiastic about creating an environment in which younger members can participate, contribute ideas and take responsibility. His own journey, from a relatively recent initiate to helping establish a business supporting the Lodge's home, is one example.

He also hopes the experience at Mickley might encourage other Masonic Hall committees to think differently about how their buildings are used.

There is no suggestion that every Hall should become a gaming venue. What works at Mickley will not necessarily work elsewhere. Nevertheless, the principle of finding sustainable uses for buildings, opening them to the wider community and working with people who bring new ideas deserves consideration.

Celebrating 75 years

Against this background, Prudhoe Castle Lodge's 75th anniversary offered a particularly welcome opportunity to celebrate.



Following a formal Lodge meeting, Brethren and visitors enjoyed a joyous festive board, reflecting on the Lodge's remarkable history and the contribution of those who have supported it through the generations.

The occasion also provided an opportunity to recognise the determination of the current membership after a challenging period.

There is an appealing symmetry to Prudhoe Castle's story.

In 1959, members took a considerable financial risk to purchase an old cinema and transform it into a permanent home for Freemasonry. More than six decades later, another group of members has helped secure that same building's future by embracing a very different opportunity.

Neither achievement happened without hard work, personal commitment or difficult decisions.

The former Cosy Cinema now welcomes tabletop gamers, tournament competitors, local residents and Freemasons, sometimes bringing them together in ways its original founders could scarcely have imagined.

Yet behind the gaming tables and retail displays, Prudhoe Castle Lodge continues to meet, perform its ceremonies and welcome new members.

Seventy-five years after its consecration, the Lodge's greatest achievement may not simply be that it has survived, but that its members remain willing to work together to ensure it has a future.

The founders of Prudhoe Castle Lodge built something worth preserving. Today's members are working to make sure it remains worth belonging to.

A New Emblem of Masonic Learning

A new symbol of educational achievement is appearing in Lodges, recognising Brethren who have completed the Solomon Academy Diploma and their commitment to Masonic learning.



The Solomon Academy tie pin features a scroll enclosed within a laurel wreath, drawing inspiration from the emblem associated with the former office of Grand Orator, which remains connected with Masonic Learning and Development.

Laurel wreaths have long signified achievement, while the scroll represents knowledge. Together they speak to a Brother's commitment to understanding Freemasonry, its history, traditions and symbolism.

The Diploma is achieved through UGLE's online learning platform, Solomon, by completing Welcome Apprentice, Welcome Fellowcraft, Welcome Master Mason and Welcome Companion, each concluding with a short assessment.

The next time you notice somebody wearing one of the pins, ask what they discovered. It could begin an interesting conversation about Solomon's presentations, videos and articles available to members.

With thanks to W Bro Bob Waddell, Provincial Grand Learning & Development Officer.

Fifty Years of Service and Six Solomon Diplomas at Morden Lodge

Morden Lodge No. 5722 celebrated a memorable evening that recognised half a century of Masonic service, six achievements in Masonic learning and an opportunity to introduce prospective members to the Craft.



W Bro Robert (Bob) Conway received his 50-year certificate from W Bro David Southern, Assistant Provincial Grand Master. The Lodge was called off so that Bob's wife, family members and other non-Masonic guests could join the Brethren in the Lodge room for the presentation. Among the guests were six men who had been speaking to Morden Lodge about joining Freemasonry.

Bob's younger brother Steven, himself a member of Morden Lodge, was among those attending. David's presentation reflected on an eventful life that has taken Bob from the North East to sea, into engineering and, later, ordained ministry.

A life of service

Bob joined the Merchant Navy as a radio officer in 1970 after studying at South Shields Marine Technical College. He subsequently pursued a career in electronics and engineering, including many

years with Hewlett-Packard, where he contributed to the development of LTO data storage technology.

Introduced to Freemasonry by his father, Bob was initiated into Morden Lodge at Maple Terrace on 16 September 1976. Although work took him away from the North East for much of the next five decades, he maintained his connection with his mother Lodge. He also joined St John's Lodge No. 818 in Monmouthshire and was installed as its Master in February 1994.

Bob was ordained as a Church of England deacon in 2012 and priest in 2013. Having returned to the Newcastle area in 2022, he now regularly attends Morden alongside Steven. One particularly meaningful memory from his Masonic life was having the privilege of acting as Installing Master when his late elder brother Bryan became Master of Morden Lodge.

Six diplomas and six prospective members



The evening also celebrated the value of continued Masonic learning. W Bro Bob Waddell, Provincial Grand Learning & Development Officer, explained the Solomon Academy Diploma before announcing that six Brethren from Morden Lodge had achieved it.

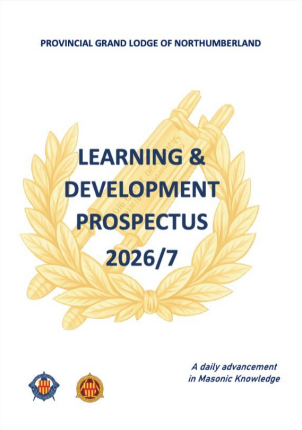
Four recipients were present to receive their diplomas and accompanying badges from W Bro David Southern, while the Worshipful Master accepted the remaining two on behalf of the absent recipients.

The six prospective members were also welcomed at the Festive Board, allowing them to experience both the ceremonial surroundings and the fellowship that follows a Lodge meeting.

It was a fitting evening for Morden Lodge: celebrating longstanding service, recognising those still learning and opening its doors to those considering the first steps of their own Masonic journeys.

With thanks to W Bro Bob Waddell.

Launch of the Provincial Learning & Development Prospectus



The Provincial Learning & Development Team has launched its Learning & Development Prospectus for 2026/27, bringing together opportunities and resources to help Brethren and Companions continue their Masonic learning.

Introduced by the Provincial Grand Master, the Prospectus covers workshops for Lodge Officers, Solomon and the Solomon Academy, and the Portal. It is intended to make it easier to discover what is available, whether you are newly initiated or have been involved in Freemasonry for many years.

W Bro Bob Waddell, Provincial Grand Learning & Development Officer, hopes it will encourage members to make learning an enjoyable part of their Masonic journey, rather than something that ends when they leave school. The team can also help anyone who needs support accessing the material.

Read the 2026/27 Learning & Development Prospectus: View the Prospectus

With thanks to W Bro Bob Waddell.

2025–26 Provincial Officers' End-of-Year Dinner



The Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master, Kevin Peter Stannard, and the Very Worshipful Deputy Provincial Grand Master, John Nigel Bruce, joined 26 Provincial Officers at the Northern Counties Club in Newcastle to mark the conclusion of their year of service. Thanks were extended to W Bro Eaun Duff for arranging the evening.

Provincial Grand Senior Warden W Bro Philip Rodney Hutchinson reflected on the year, recalling his first toast in the role at the previous Provincial Grand Lodge Annual Meeting and expressing thanks for the opportunity to address Brethren again.

Provincial Grand Junior Warden W Bro Peter Younger spoke about the value of membership, welcoming new members and the fellowship that unites the Province.

The Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies and his team were thanked for their professionalism during Provincial visits throughout the year. The Provincial Grand Master concluded by proposing a toast to his officers, recognising their commitment and contribution to Northumberland Freemasonry.

With thanks to W Bros Phil Hutchinson and Peter Younger.

Northumberland Festival 2031

A Small Gesture. A Lasting Difference.

A message from your Provincial Grand Charity Steward

Brethren, Companions and friends,

Our Northumberland 2031 Festival is now well underway, and I want to begin by saying a heartfelt thank you to everyone who has already responded to our call to action. Your generosity is making a difference, and we have made a good start!

Since our launch in April, we now have 451 members projecting Steward Level, 206 projecting Vice Patron, 64 projecting Patron and a further 76 projecting Grand Patron. These are encouraging figures, and I thank every one of you who has already committed to supporting our Festival. Remember that Jewels are awarded up-front and the latest order will be with your Lodges in the next week or so.

We've made an encouraging start, but there is still much we can achieve together. I appreciate that circumstances differ and that many members are facing financial pressures of their own. For those who are able to contribute, however modestly, your support will make a real difference.

What does a pint cost you?

I'm told that the average cost of a half-pint of beer in the North-East is now around £2.28. Think about that for a moment.

For approximately the price of one half-pint a week, you could donate £10 a month to our Festival. With Gift Aid, that becomes £12.50 a month for the charity, assuming you are eligible and have made a valid Gift Aid declaration.

Over the remaining term of our Festival, that small, regular commitment could generate more than £600 for charity.

Now think about what £600 could mean to someone facing a crisis.

It could help provide a family with food support for several months. It could help someone struggling to keep a roof over their head or pay their utility bills. It could fund counselling sessions for someone experiencing mental health difficulties. Sometimes just a few sessions can be life-changing. It could help a child or young adult with books, educational resources or tuition costs.

Whilst you may barely notice £10 leaving your account each month, someone else may notice the difference it makes every single day.

Why regular giving matters

A one-off donation is always welcome, but regular giving offers something particularly valuable: certainty.

It enables The Freemasons' Charity to plan ahead, commit resources and develop services that support people not just today, but months and even years into the future.

Our Festival is about more than reaching a fundraising target. It is about ensuring that help is there when people need it most.

£10 a month may not, on its own, save a life. But it can provide breathing space during a crisis, helping someone regain stability, rebuild confidence and find a way forward.

And when thousands of Freemasons each make a modest, regular commitment, the collective impact can be extraordinary.

Don't put it off. Do it today!

If you have already signed up, thank you. Please keep going, and encourage a fellow member to join you.

If you haven't yet made a regular donation, please take a few minutes today to put that right. Speak to your Lodge Charity Steward, who will be pleased to help, or visit www.mcf.org.uk and click "Donate".

You don't have to make a fortune to make a difference. You simply have to play your part.

One half-pint a week. £10 a month. A real difference to someone's life.

Let's make every member count and make our Northumberland 2031 Festival something of which we can all be immensely proud.

Thank you for your support.

Paul Winship PAGStB
Provincial Grand Charity Steward

Silent Auction Raises £400

The silent auction of two original framed artworks by John Dyer of Windle Creative, depicting Newcastle United legends Kevin Keegan and Alan Shearer, closed on 31 August.

Mike Webber won both pictures with bids of £200 each, raising £400 for the Northumberland 2031 Festival.

Our thanks go to Mike for his generosity and to John Dyer for donating the artworks in support of the Festival.

With thanks to W Bro Paul Winship.

On the Move for 2031: The Travelling Gavel and Sceptre

Two initiatives are being prepared to bring Lodges and Chapters together in support of the Northumberland 2031 Festival.

The Travelling Gavel, coordinated by W Bro Guy Smith, is intended to move between Craft Lodges. The Travelling Sceptre, under the direction of E Comp Ian Campbell, will provide a similar opportunity for Royal Arch Chapters.

Both items are being manufactured, with plans for a New Year launch. The aim is to encourage visits, strengthen friendships and support the Festival's fundraising activities. Details of how to participate, transfer the Gavel or Sceptre and follow their progress will be announced before the launch.

Two travelling symbols, one Province and one shared ambition.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Northumberland Light Blues AGM, 3 November

The Northumberland Light Blues Annual General Meeting takes place on Tuesday 3 November 2026. It offers an opportunity to reflect on the group's progress, discuss its future direction and consider how it can best support newer Brethren and Companions across the Province.

Topics include the proposed NLB constitution, closer working between Craft and Royal Arch, and the feedback received through the NLB survey. The meeting also offers a chance for members to share ideas and help shape future social and support activities.

Provincial Grand Lodge Annual Meeting, 26 November

The Annual Meeting of Provincial Grand Lodge will take place at Newcastle Racecourse on Thursday 26 November 2026 at 3.00pm. Brethren are asked to be seated by 2.30pm.

Present and Past Provincial Grand Officers are summoned to attend, and Master Masons of the Province are invited and encouraged to join them.

Dinner follows in the Gosforth Park Suite, priced at £35 per person. Please register by 5 November 2026 using the appropriate link: Book to dine | Attend without dining or tender apologies





Photographs: Provincial Grand Lodge Annual Meeting, 2025.

Wallsend Masonic Social Night, Saturday 5 December

Join us at Wallsend Masonic Hall on Saturday 5 December, 7.00pm–11.00pm, for live entertainment from Stephz, a hot and cold buffet, bingo and a grand raffle.

Tickets are £15 per person and proceeds support Teddies for Love and Care. For tickets or information, please contact Jim Peddie or Jeff Bulman.

Submitted by Jeff Bulman, Tyne Lodge No. 991.

Passing It On: Regalia with a Second Life

A reminder from Issue 2

The Province has a selection of new and nearly new Royal Arch regalia available at modest cost, with proceeds supporting the NMCA. Companions taking up office, or those with regalia they no longer need, are encouraged to get in touch so items can continue to be put to good use. For details, contact W Bro John Heaton on 07729 778185.

BEYOND THE CRAFT & CHAPTER

News and stories from the wider Masonic family. Freemasonry extends beyond Craft and Royal Arch, with additional Orders offering opportunities to explore Masonic history, tradition and fellowship. This section will carry occasional news from those Orders, clearly identified as distinct from Craft and Chapter.

A Special Installation for King Edwin Lodge No. 7



King Edwin Lodge No. 7 marked a significant occasion on Friday 2 October at Newcastle East Masonic Hall, Byker, for the Installation of Revd Kt Robin Francis Knight, KBHC, as Worshipful Deputy Master.

The ceremony was conducted by Regional Grand Prefect R Revd Kt David J Roach. For Robin, received into the Order in 2013, the Installation was a milestone he had anticipated for many years.

Grand Visitor General R Revd Kt Graeme Hutchinson attended with a number of Grand Officers and visitors. Having appointed and installed his Officers, the new Worshipful Deputy Master received E Kt Robert Anthony Young, P Gt W of R, of Brinkburn Preceptory No. 264, as a Scottish Master and Scottish Master of St Andrew.

Robin, also Intendant-General of the Red Cross of Constantine for Durham, welcomed past and present Intendant-Generals R Ill Kt Dr Alan Beckerton of Derbyshire and R Ill Kt David J Roach of North and East Yorkshire.

A buffet luncheon followed, allowing members to congratulate Robin and welcome Brother Robert “Bob” Young.

With thanks to Stewart Bell and David Armstrong.

Northumberland Knights Templar at the London Annual Meeting



The strengthening of fraternal bonds between Provinces was at the heart of a recent visit to the capital by the Knights Templar of Northumberland. On Tuesday 29 September 2026, the Right Eminent Knight Steve Ranson, Provincial Prior, and Eminent Knight David Armstrong, Provincial Sub Prior, attended the Annual Meeting of the Provincial Priory of London.

Held at the historic Mark Masons' Hall on St James's Street, the meeting provided a wonderful opportunity to share in the successes of the London Brethren and reinforce the longstanding friendship between the two Provinces. This occasion marked the first official visit to the London Annual Meeting for both the Provincial Prior and Sub Prior, who were received with the warmth and hospitality that defines the Order.

Visits such as these serve as a vital reminder of the unity across the wider Masonic family, allowing leaders to exchange ideas and further their shared commitment to service and integrity. The Provincial Priory of Northumberland extends its sincere thanks to the London Brethren for their gracious welcome and looks forward to many more years of collaborative friendship.

With thanks to David Armstrong, Provincial Priory of Northumberland.

Northumberland Knights Templar Visit Lincoln Cathedral



Members of the Provincial Priory of Northumberland travelled south on 3 October for the Annual Meeting of the Provincial Priory of Lincolnshire in Lincoln Cathedral.

Right Eminent Knight Steve Ranson and Eminent Knight David Armstrong were joined by Eminent Knights John Baldwin, Dennis Beecroft and Scott Hunter, representing Northumberland and enjoying an opportunity to renew friendships with brethren from another Province.

The delegation received a warm welcome from their Lincolnshire hosts. The ceremonial occasion, fellowship and impressive historic surroundings made it a memorable visit.

With thanks to Steve Ranson, Provincial Priory of Northumberland.