the Surrey gridiron

Issue 64 OCTOBER 2026

Grand Council of the Allied Masonic Degrees

On Tuesday the 27th of October, Brethren from across the Constitution, and further afield, converged on Freemasons Hall, London, for the annual meeting of the Grand Council of the Allied Masonic Degrees.

As is the usual custom, some of the Surrey delegation met up in Wetherspoon's before going along to Freemason's Hall.















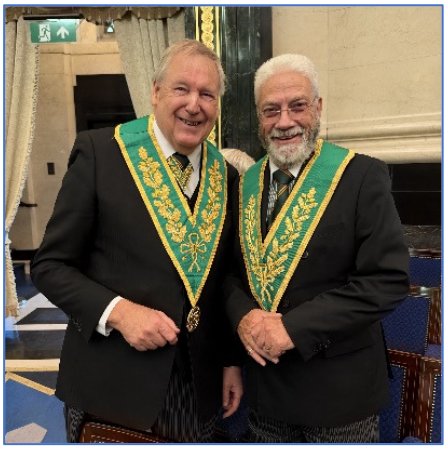
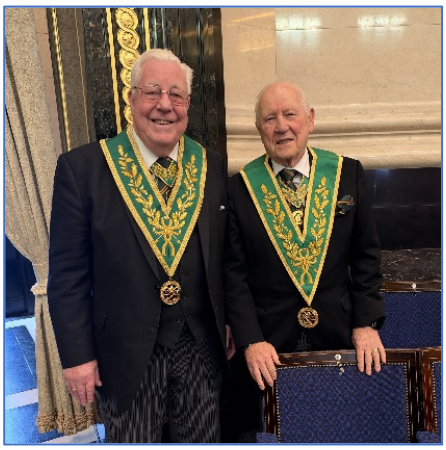




The annual meeting of Grand Council was presided over by R.W.Bro. Colin R Woodcock, MBE, Deputy Grand Master, as our Grand Master was unwell.







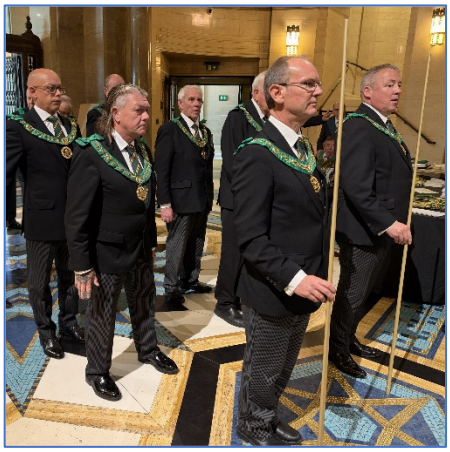





GRAND COUNCIL













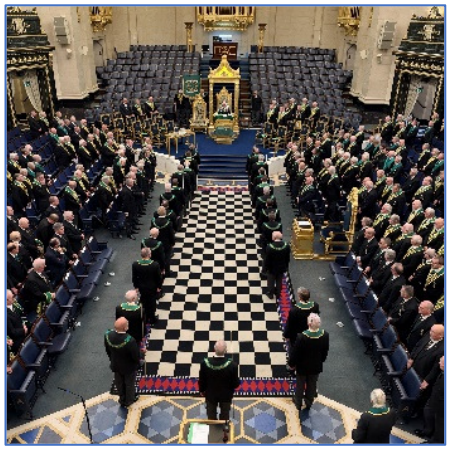
















The meeting included routine business, including the re-election of the Grand Master.

The Deputy Grand Master conferred Grand Rank appointments and promotions on many Brethren, including several Brethren from the District of Surrey.

The Deputy Grand Master addressed Grand Council. During his Address representatives from International Districts and Masonic Orders were warmly welcomed. Gratitude was expressed to attendees, and congratulations were extended to all those to received appointment or promotion in Grand Rank. .

. After transacting any other business regularly brought before Grand Council, Grand Council was closed and we retired for refreshments. At dinner, wine was taken, and Toasts were proposed and responded to, before many made what was for some a long journey home.

Thank you to all those who were able to attend and make this another very enjoyable meeting of A.M.D. Grand Council.



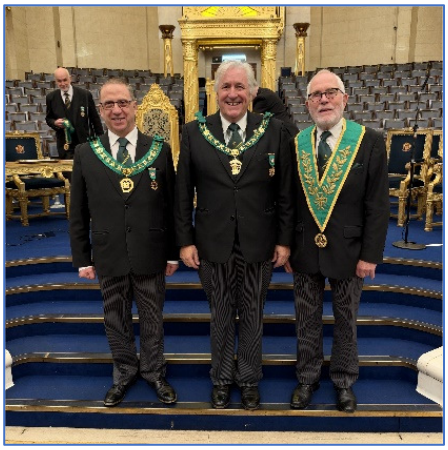




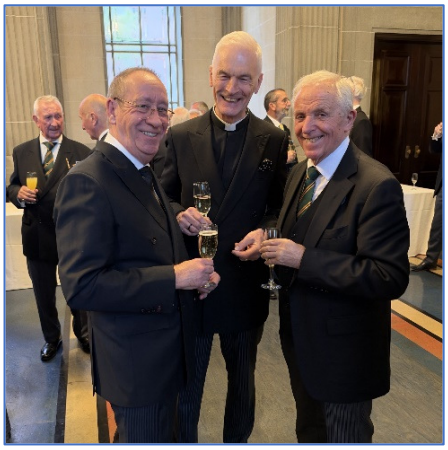





























Congratulations to the Surrey Brethren who received Grand Honours

Appointed to Grand Junior Deacon was W.Bro. Ian Smith; and to Grand Steward, W.Bro. Norman Jones. Those receiving a first appointment were W.Bro. Lt. Cdr. Peter Jack to Past Grand Inner Guard; and W.Bro. Ray Seeley to Past Grand Inner Guard

Several of us were there to support our Brethren, including our District Grand Prefect.



Runnymede Council

I never fail to be interested in this section of my masonic life because of the splendid variety of ceremonies and the relatively rare occurrences of coming into contact with them. I went to Surbiton by car in spite of the concern of limited parking spaces. There were two meetings on that day, but I arrived at the end of the day, so all was well.







There was a meeting just prior to ours, so I got the gear ready for our meeting in an anteroom. One of my interesting efforts, no words to learn just a quick practice led by W.Bro. Bill Barr our DC for the evening. I was Sword Bearer, (reserve) with the usual comments from good friends about the sword being almost as tall as the brother carrying it!



The meeting started and then our DC went in and asked for entrance in the usual formal way on behalf of W.Bro. Bob Tuthill, our Deputy District Grand Prefect. I managed to deposit the sword on its cushion and went to my seat. I always carry my book with me to follow the ritual in the vain hope that some of the words I read may stay in my overcrowded brain.

Our Deputy District Grand Prefect was well received and in turn introduced his retinue to the members of Runnymede Council. Minutes were dealt with as were the accounts and then W.Bro. Bob Tuthill presented a Grand Council certificate to Bro. Andrew Croci. This is probably one of the most illuminated pieces of official recognition I have witnessed in my relatively short life as a mason. It was well received and, I am sure, will be treasured by Andrew. In fact, he received two as there was a mistake on the original and Grand Lodge sent a corrected version for Andrew's safe keeping.





My good friend, John Cogger, was then installed in the chair of this fine Council, in my absence. I am just a happy brother and still learning. Several of us had to be invited to leave for a short while Bro. John was installed as Master of the Lodge of St Lawrence the Martyr and therefore Master of the Council. The Almoner's report was then delivered and alms collected.

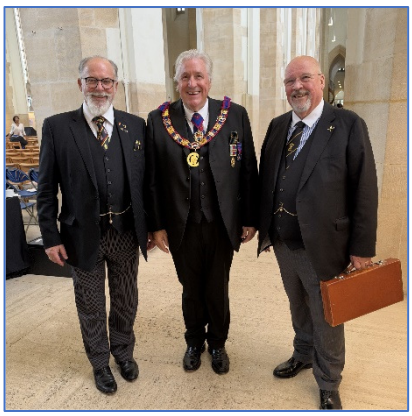
We then retired to the Festive Board, spending some time enjoying good food and very good company. This is a good Council and Surbiton always a pleasant place to go to. Why not give it a try? Their next meeting is in the evening, on the first Wednesday in February 2027.

Thanks to Michael Fenech

Provincial Thanksgiving Service at Guildford Cathedral

The Companion Orders were well represented at the Annual Order of Divine Service held on Sunday the 27th of September 2026. The service was led by The Reverend Patrick Coleman, and the Officiating Officers were W.Bro. Ian Whitley, Provincial Grand Chaplain, and W.Bro. Ivan Dias-Cooke, Deputy Provincial Grand Chaplain. As well as the Companion Orders, there were representatives from the Order of Women's Freemasonry. The Preacher was The Reverend Canon Mike Branscombe.







At 1.45 pm the processions made their way down the aisle during the Processional Hymn led by a Verger, followed by The Reverend Patrick Coleman and The Reverend Canon Mike Branscombe. These were followed by members of the Middlesex Provincial Executive, Heads of Companion Orders in Surrey, and representatives from the Order of Women's Freemasonry.

The Reverend Patrick Coleman welcomed the Brethren, their families and friends to the Cathedral, and W.Bro. Ian Whitley, Provincial Grand Chaplain, offered the Bidding Prayer.

The Reverend Canon Mike Branscombe gave an Address where he complimented Freemasonry and all the good work they do. W.Bro. Ian Whitley, Provincial Grand Chaplain, offered a prayer before R.W.Bro. Nick Burger gave his closing address, and The Reverend Canon Mike Branscombe offered the final Prayer and Blessing

After the National Anthem the Clergy retired, followed by the Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master and his Officers, along with our honoured guests, to the sound of the Recessional Organ Voluntary.

Many thanks to the members of the Surrey Provincial Choir led by W.Bro. Carl Jackson *MVO,* PJGD, Provincial Grand Organist, and the Organist, Bro. James Furniss-Roe.

We all enjoyed the refreshments in the Cathedral after the Service, which rounded up a most enjoyable afternoon. Well done to all those involved in the organisation of the day.

We have always had a special relationship with Guildford Cathedral. The middle window bearing the Masonic Province of Surrey crest was donated by Surrey Freemasons at the construction of the Cathedral, as a Silver Alms Dish was presented to the Cathedral in 1961 by the Mark Province of Surrey for the Cathedral's Lady Chapel.

Thames Valley District

Under pleasant autumn skies, Bletchley Masonic Hall hosted the Annual District Meeting of the Allied Masonic Degrees in Thames Valley on Saturday 17th October 2026. The occasion brought together 68 Brethren, including the Past Deputy Grand Master, eight Right Worshipful Brethren, distinguished Heads of Orders, visitors from numerous Districts and members of Thames Valley's Councils, for a memorable day of fellowship and celebration.



Following a warm welcome from the District Grand Prefect, the minutes of the previous meeting were approved before Brethren observed a respectful silence in memory of those called to the Grand Lodge Above.



The District Grand Prefect was delighted to reappoint W.Bro. Paul Rush as Deputy District Grand Prefect, followed by the appointment and investiture of District Grand Officers through first appointments, promotions and reappointments. Recognition was given to brethren receiving early appointments before occupying the Chair of their respective Councils, acknowledging their outstanding contributions whilst reminding them, with good humour, that their new green collarettes carried greater expectations.

A significant announcement was the appointment of Bro Jarrad Lewis as the District's first Communications, Development and Innovation Officer. Supported by volunteers from across the Councils, this new role will focus on raising the profile of the Allied Masonic Degrees, strengthening communications and developing recruitment and engagement initiatives to support the Order's future growth.

The District Grand Prefect also welcomed closer collaboration between Heads of Orders alongside plans for a cross-Order newsletter to showcase Masonic activities and achievements across the wider community.



Celebrating distinguished service, the District Grand Prefect congratulated W.Bros. Ralph Newell and Brian Farrelly on their first appointments to Grand Rank as Past Grand Standard Bearers (PGStB), and V.W. Bro James Hilditch on his reappointment as Grand Treasurer, ahead of their forthcoming investitures.

Tribute was also paid to retiring District Officers and the District Executive. Particular thanks went to District Secretary Peter, who received the District Grand Prefect's Certificate of Merit recognising 40 years of dedicated service, hard work and wise counsel. The District Grand Director of Ceremonies and his team were thanked for their efforts, with both the Deputy and Assistant District Grand Directors of Ceremonies receiving well-deserved promotions to Past District Grand Junior Warden.

Charity remained a prominent theme, with the District's recently established 100 Club already enabling donations of £1,000 each to Katherine Hospice House and Riding for the Disabled. Members were encouraged to support the scheme, helping extend charitable giving throughout the community. The District Grand Prefect also congratulated three Councils now proudly wearing the Grand Master's Keystone Fund collarette, expressing hope that others would follow.

Looking towards the future, the District Grand Prefect acknowledged continuing recruitment challenges. Seven new members had joined during the preceding year, one of whom were formally welcomed at the meeting. Whilst fewer than the previous year, renewed emphasis on recruitment, communication and collaboration offers promising opportunities for growth.

Concluding his address, the District Grand Prefect thanked visiting dignitaries, fellow District Grand Prefects, Officers and members for their continued friendship and support. With characteristic humour, he remarked that he could almost hear the shutters rising and the pre-luncheon drinks being prepared — a fitting signal that the formal proceedings were drawing to a close.

Brethren subsequently enjoyed a splendid festive board, sharing in the warmth of Masonic fellowship.





The meeting was a celebration of service, generosity and shared ambition. With fresh initiatives, dedicated Officers and a clear commitment to the future, Thames Valley looks forward to another successful year of fellowship, charitable endeavour and growth.

Thanks to Bob Tuthill

District Grand Council of Surrey web site:
https://www.surreycompanionorders.com/welcome-allied-masonic-degrees

Allied Masonic Degrees

The 2026 Annual Meeting of District Grand Council

Save the Date

The 2026 Annual Meeting of the District Grand Council of Surrey will be held on Saturday the 5th of December 2026 at the Croydon Masonic Hall.

The meeting will commence at 11.00 a.m. and will be followed by lunch at 1.00 p.m.

Brethren should be seated by 10.45.