



The St Nicholas Lodge Bugle

August 2025



Gladiolus and Poppy – birth flowers of August

Welcome to the August edition of the St Nicholas Lodge Bugle. Summer seems to be fast disappearing and no doubt we are all making the most of the warm weather. Gladiolus and the Poppy are this month's birth flowers. Like the lodges movable and immovable jewels these flowers have meaning, and in this instance the Gladiolus stands tall, symbolising strength, intelligence and moral integrity. The Poppy symbolises remembrance and peace and also agriculture promising a bountiful crop when seen in fields.

Our August meeting was a memorable occasion as we were treated to an excellent explanation of the second degree tracing board by W. Bro. David Birkinshaw.

Two of our fellowcrafts were in attendance to have the explanation, Bro Doug Stevens and Bro Graeme Needham.

A lovely Festive Board was had where we were joined by nine visitors from six different lodges. We were especially delighted to welcome W. Bro Michael Beckett from Sykes Lodge No. 1040 as well as a visitor from Devon, W. Bro Andy Irvine of the Lodge of Harmony No. 372 who is visiting the area with family.





From Left, Bro Doug Stevens, Bro. Graeme Needham, Worshipful Master Scott Davison and W. Bro. David Birkinshaw.

Looking Ahead



Lodge of Instruction



Will be back in September 2025!

- September

Following a successful ballot at our August meeting we will be having a first degree initiation. There will also be a visit from Lodge of Alliance.

- October

Third Degree Ceremony – Daniel Watson

Charity



Lodge Raffle

The Festive Board raffle proceeds went towards Alex Blackman's fundraising efforts for Cancer Research. He has successfully ran his 62 mile in July – Congratulations Alex!



Westway Open Arms

St Nicholas lodge was delighted recently to support West Way Open Arms to assist in the purchasing of a 65" and 55" screens and sound bars for the centre to replace out dated equipment that was over 12 years old.

St Nicholas Lodge Benevolent fund Donated £500 and applied for match Funding from the Provincial charity F.C.Y.N.E.R. who donated a fantastic £730 which enabled for this equipment to be purchased.

Westway open Arms are much more than a foodbank and donations such as this make a big difference to the community centre and the social activities they provide.



From left: W. Bro Cedric Thornton with Bernie Brown, Centre Manager and W. Bro Scott Davison.



Chapter



The Supreme Order of the Holy Royal Arch of Jerusalem (Or just Chapter), Denison Chapter 1248 is currently in recess and our next meeting is on **Wednesday 8th October**.

The Royal Arch together with Craft Freemasonry constitute 'Pure Antient Masonry'. Joining the Royal Arch after becoming a Master Mason is an integral part of your Masonic journey that has been taking place for almost 300 years.

Learn more about this important and fabulous degree, which can only be joined after becoming a Master Mason. [Royal Arch Masonry](#)

Should you like to know more and are interested in joining chapter, which is an essential part of your masonic journey, please contact our Chapter representative, W. Bro John White.

Social Events

Our social secretary W. Bro Roger Kaye has a few events planned for the future:

Confirmed at the moment is:

- 25th August – The Cornerstone Circle have arranged a Masonic Tour of York which a number of our brethren have confirmed are attending. Following the tour the St Nicholas brethren will be undertaking their own cultural tour of York.



Daily Advancement

Freemasonry in Japanese POW Camps

As we approach the 80th anniversary of VJ day on 15th August, we take a look at how Freemasonry endured during the terrible years in captivity in Japanese prisoner of war camps.

During World War II, over 190,000 British and Commonwealth troops and 130,000 Allied civilians were captured by Japanese forces, across East Asia. Held in camps from Singapore to Burma, these men endured starvation, disease, forced labour, overcrowding and psychological torment. By war's end, 37,583 Commonwealth soldiers were released — but tens of thousands never returned. The death rate among Allied POWs in Japanese custody reached nearly 30%, far higher than in European theatres.

In this crucible of suffering, despite constant surveillance, Freemasonry became a quiet sanctuary of resilience, dignity, hope and brotherhood. Masons managed to find ways to meet, support one another, and uphold the principles of the Craft.

One of the most documented examples comes from Changi Prison Camp in Singapore, where British and Australian Freemasons, including VW Bro Harry Wardle Wylie (Past Assistant Grand Master of the Eastern Archipelago) secretly convened under extraordinary conditions. A Dispensation was granted to allow meetings under the Lodge of Instruction of Lodge of St George No. 1152, Singapore.

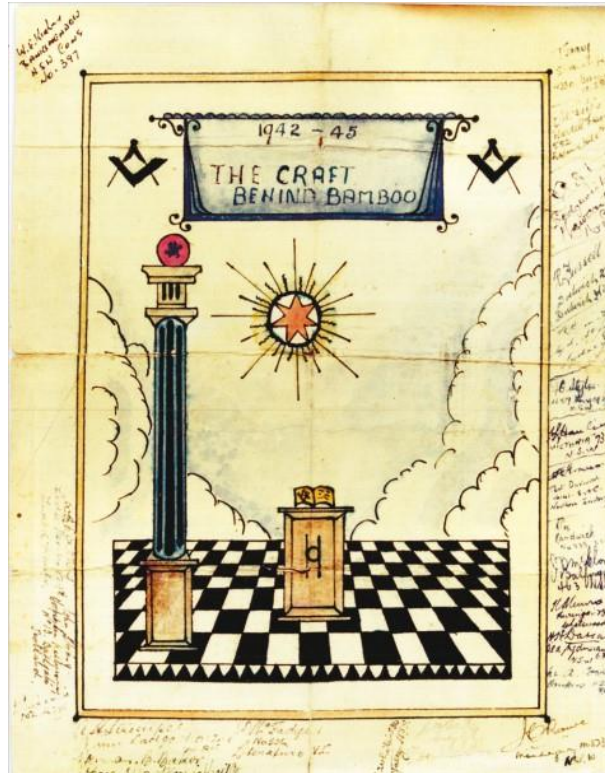
- **Rituals Practiced:** English, Scottish, and Irish Constitution rituals were rehearsed and performed in secret.
- **Security Measures:** Tylers were posted to warn of approaching Japanese guards.
- **Tools and Symbols:** Candles were salvaged, candlesticks crafted, and tracing boards hand-drawn — one by a Brother who later died building the Burma-Siam Railway.
- **The Changi Tree:** A shattered tree in the camp became a symbol of the **broken column**, representing fallen brethren and the resilience of the Craft.

The discovery of another group of Freemason's meeting in Changi led to the formation of an International Masonic Prisoner of War Association, including members like Lt. Col. H. S. Ling of the Royal Norfolk Regiment. Despite national and military divisions, Masonic unity transcended boundaries.

Masonry mattered during this difficult time and for many, Freemasonry in POW camps wasn't just ritual, it was resistance. It offered: -

- **Mental and emotional refuge** in a world of suffering.
- **Moral structure** when all other institutions had collapsed.
- **Human connection** in the face of dehumanisation.





An improvised First Degree Tracing Board (credit Freemasons NSW and ACT)

By late 1943, meetings ceased due to the increasing risk of discovery. Many members were sent to work on the infamous Burma-Siam Railway, where 16,000 POWs died. Yet the bonds forged in those secret lodges endured.

After the Japanese surrender, a Masonic Thanksgiving Service was held — a solemn tribute to the endurance of Freemasonry and the lives it sustained. Freemasonry not only survived captivity, but it had also helped sustain men survive it.

After the war Harry Wyle gave a detailed address to the Jubilee Masters Lodge No 2712 in London, recalling his experience. This account was later published in the Freemasons Chronicle on 7 July 1951.

These hidden lodges were acts of courage. They preserved identity, dignity, and hope — proving that even in captivity, the Masonic light could not be extinguished.

I hope you have enjoyed this edition and please let me know if you would like anything included for future editions and I hope you enjoy the rest of your summer.

Jamie Wallis

Editor