

The Portsmouth Lodge No.487

Almoners Report

17th October 2025

Bro Wardens, Distinguished Brethren, Brethren All,

This month I've been in contact with a few brethren that we've not seen recently due to health issues, and they all send their apologies for not being here with us tonight, but also send warm wishes to everyone, and hope we have a fantastic evening tonight! To which I responded by saying we will all raise a glass and think of them at the festive board and when the hands are on the square.

An update on WBro Chris Ford. unfortunately he didn't have the operation on the 7th due to the surgeon being ill, but has hopefully re organised another date, and will be back with us in the not to distant future.

WBro Bob Blackman is still waiting for the operation date on his hip, and again hopes it will not be long, and can join us all again soon.

I had a lovely little catch up with WBro Gary Young, he sends his regards to everyone, and says he will be back with us again soon.

I also called and had a lovely chat with Peggy Malthouse, and offered any help that she might need, and informed her I will pop in to see her soon, and sent her best wishes on behalf of everyone at 487 and reassured her that if she needed anything at all we are only a call away.

So, after another stint in his local B&B, namely Queen Alexandra Hospital in Cosham, I would like to welcome back our beloved Bro, WBro Barry Filer. The nurses have fixed him up a treat once again, and I'm sure I speak on behalf of everyone here tonight when I say, its great to have you back with us Barry, and we all really hope you continue to make it to our future meetings too.

WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY

As per my wats app message that I sent out on the 10th October. I wanted to make you all aware that on that day each year, its World Mental Health Day, and that we should all be aware that there are other illnesses around, that aren't so visible than other ailments and disabilities.

Now you may ask yourself, what is he going on about! Well, let me explain.

We all know, statistically, men are less likely than women to talk and open up about their feelings in general, but even more so where mental health is concerned. So, as we are a society of men, a fraternal organisation, a BROTHERHOOD, we need to turn these statistics around!

If I asked you all, what is the biggest killer in men under 50, you may say, heart problems, cancer or stroke, but you would be wrong. The biggest killer of men under the age of 50 is suicide! A key mental health issue which disproportionately affects men.

Now I, more than anyone, would love to see this change, and see men becoming more used to the fact that they can open up to each other, and talk about their problems more freely, as talking openly is one of the most effective things for men's mental health due to it helping break down the stigma, reduces isolation, and is a crucial first step toward finding solutions and support

But if you still feel your unable to talk to your fellow brothers brethren, then I need you all to know that freemasonry longs to help those that may suffer from mental health issues, and various groups and practices have been set up across the Province, and further afield, to help brethren when times may be getting a little tough.

These being in the form of;

Amity Groups:-

we have a few in the Solent Area,

Gosport Banter Group which Meet on the first and third Thursday of each month, including outings and visits. Contact David Andrews on 07806 430279 or chairman@gosportbanterclub.co.uk

For the Ladies, we have a 'Chatterbox Club' who meet weekly on Wednesdays at Fareham Masonic centre from 1030 onwards

contact Mrs Sandie O'Neil on 07745 823789

or sandie.oneil@talktalk.net

and the

Men have a group called 'Grumpy Old Men' that meet weekly on a Tuesday morning from 1030 as well.

The contact for them is Andy Andrew on 01329 832959 or 07711202023 or

We also have the 'WELFARE' part of the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Provincial Website which you can access by going to the 'Members Area' then the top heading 'Welfare'

The short cut link is <https://hantsiowfreemasons.org/members-area/welfare/>

And lastly, Counselling.

You may not be aware, but the MCF runs the Counselling Careline which has specialist counsellors for anyone struggling to cope emotionally.

Additional Counselling sessions can be provided, if necessary face to face, rather than on the telephone.

This is a free service and requires no form filling or application.

A call should be made to the MCF to make an enquiry on 0800 035 60 90

So Brethren, I wanted this Almoner's report not only to make you all aware of World mental health day which again, is on the 10th October every year, but I'm also hoping I've made you more aware that not all illnesses are visible, and by simply picking up the phone and calling someone you've not spoken to in a while, or better still, meeting up with and keeping an eye on those you've not seen in ages, could be just the boost that person needed, without even realising it.

These little things can have a big result, not only by helping someone that may need it, but also promote awareness of mental health issues, mobilize support for people experiencing mental health challenges and reduce the stigma surrounding them!

If you need any more information on what I've mentioned Brethren, then please don't hesitate to contact me.

Yours S&F

WBro Gareth

Almoner of The Portsmouth Lodge