



The Grand Lodge of Antient Free and Accepted Masons of Scotland

William Ramsay McGhee, MStJ, D.L., Grand Master Mason

10 July 2020

Brethren

The past week has brought about quite a few changes with some of the restrictions easing, allowing some of our Masonic Clubs to prepare to reopen but not in the way we are accustomed to – the Government guidelines are in place and all Clubs who decide to open will require to adhere strictly to the guidelines – we don't want any adverse publicity about Masonic Clubs ignoring the rules. In some of our Districts things are changing too with meetings starting or about to start again but unfortunately, we have some Districts where the pandemic seems to be taking hold again and the number of coronavirus cases are rising.

Also published in the past week has been the United Grand Lodge of England's "Operation Kick Start" in which it has been announced that the cessation of Masonic activity will not be extended after 17th July, therefore Lodges in England (but not in Wales) can start meeting again but with significant restrictions. I have received a few enquiries since the announcement asking if this decision includes Scotland. The short answer is no – it does not include Scotland. The Scottish Government and the UK Government are beginning to move in different ways on several issues and this is one of them. In Scotland we still cannot hold indoor meetings with any significant number of people. The first minister announced yesterday that during Phase 3 we will start to resume and re-open many activities and settings such as opening indoor pubs and restaurants, allowing more indoor meetings between households, and re-opening places of worship. Having ploughed through the changes, my understanding is that the indoor meetings alluded to will be restricted to no more than eight people at present.

The "Operation Kick Start" document contains a lot of extremely useful information. Grand Lodge of Scotland will issue a similar document as and when the time is right but, for the foreseeable future it is unlikely that we will be able to have what we would regard as normal meetings. The First Minister emphasised the fact that eliminating the virus as far as possible now - ahead of the almost inevitable challenges we will face come winter - remains the objective and that the five principles behind the FACTS campaign – face coverings; avoiding crowded spaces; cleaning hands and surfaces; two metre distancing; and self-isolation if you have symptoms – are more important than they have ever been.

We are planning for the return of Staff to Freemasons' Hall based on Scottish Government guidance and an assessment of business needs. Basically, what they are saying is that non-essential offices and call centres can reopen following implementation of relevant guidance but not before 31st July. We are now compliant with the guidance and I look forward to seeing all staff back in the building before too long.



On the Masonic Homes front, I am delighted to report that after putting all of the necessary protocols in place and having our risk assessments approved by Public Health Scotland, we have been able, in line with Scottish Government guidelines, to resume visits (outdoor only) from family members to Residents in the Masonic Homes.

Latest news from the Scottish Constitution Freemasonry Supports Facebook page is as follows –
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Scottish.Constitution.Freemasonry.Supports/>

	Last week	This week
Members	2584	2707
Posts	246	276
No of Members posting	143	150
Lodges mentioned	148	163
Provinces mentioned	29	29
Districts & Lodges abroad	8	
Monetary Value	£182,933	£207,753

Congratulations Brethren on breaking through the £200k mark – tremendous effort but we also acknowledge the tremendous “in kind” contributions that have also been made. Please keep up the good work – as the furlough scheme ends and redundancies increase there will be an even greater need for our help and assistance.

Once again, there has been an increase in the number of Overseas Members in SCFS. Another milestone has been reached on the back of the Middle East hitting the 100 members last week. This week has seen the Overseas Memberships pass through the 500.

This coming week a targeting exercise will be carried out on identified Districts etc. who have no representation in our group. There is normally a delay following an exercise such as this before results begin to be seen.

The SCFS Group now has Overseas Members from:

Bahamas, Barbados, Belgium, Bermuda, Botswana, Central South Africa, Chile, East Africa, Eastern Province of the Cape of Good Hope, Far East, Gibraltar, India, Jamaica, Jordan, Lebanon, Kwazulu Natal, Malawi, Mauritius, Middle East, Namibia, Newfoundland and Labrador, New Zealand South, North Island New Zealand, Nigeria, Panama, Peru, Sierra Leone and The Gambia, Sri Lanka, Trinidad & Tobago and Granada, Western Australia, Western Province of the Cape of Good Hope, Zambia, Zimbabwe (**33 in total**)

Within the past week: **Belgium** has been added

There were **43** Overseas Brethren approved this week

There has been a notable increase in membership from **Botswana** and **East Africa** this week

There are now over 500 Overseas Brethren in the group ... the total standing at 507

Brethren, as we enjoy the easing of restrictions, we have also witnessed Covid-19 spikes appearing in some areas so please stay alert, look after yourselves, your families and the Brethren who are in any of the vulnerable categories.

Kindest regards



Ramsay McGhee

Grand Master Mason

