

# ST EDMUNDSBURY MASONIC HALL COMPANY LIMITED

## Registered Office:

**Ashlar House  
23 Eastern Way  
Bury St Edmunds  
Suffolk IP32 7AB**

## Chairmans Report 2023

In my last Annual Report, I mentioned the irregular year which we had experienced, with specific reference to Covid 19 and the negative impact which this had imposed both on our Masonic Meetings and on external bookings. On a more positive note, the past 12 months have seen not only a notable increase in attendance at our masonic gatherings but, in addition, in the number of external bookings, both of which we hope will continue to rally, going forward.

Whilst there are reasons to be optimistic, currently, there remain many challenges. First, our outstanding loan commitment stands at £436,715. As previously highlighted, this is made up of a generous personal loan by one individual to the Hall Company of £400,000 over an 8-year term at a fixed interest rate of 3.75%. The additional sum of £36,715, as of March 2023 is the balance of a Government Bounce Back Loan of £45,000 over a 10-year term. This is at a fixed Interest rate of 2%. These commitments are closely monitored and it is only with the assistance of all brethren, supplemented by the revenue stream from external functions, that we will have a realistic prospect of honouring our obligations.

The Income from resident Lodges and other Masonic Orders which meet at Ashlar House has largely remained unchanged for many years at approximately £26,000 pa. Our annual commitment for the general running and maintenance of Ashlar House runs at approximately £75,000. Therefore, it can readily be appreciated just how significant the income stream from external bookings is. On the plus side, the Accounts show a small profit for the period July 2022 to the end February 2023. Full details are included within the Treasurer's Report.

We are aware that occasionally, an external booking may clash with a masonic booking. On the rare instances when this might occur, please be assured that we will always seek to minimise any risk of disruption and discussions will take place with the Lodge or Order affected. We do ask for your understanding and forbearance in these circumstances.

The Board asks Lodges if they will please consider the Ashlar House (Building Fund) when holding a raffle or have money to donate, as well as their external charities. We all really need to pull together, to ensure that Ashlar House continues to be successful. Additional monies raised by Lodges may be directed specifically towards reduction of our loan commitments, should this be the preference of members.

To ensure that we market the commercial aspects of Ashlar House to its fullest potential, we have recently engaged the services of Gooderham PR to focus on the promotion of our facilities. The website has been updated to attract the different styles of business to whom we might appeal.

Hopefully, all brethren are aware that there is a members' area on the website. All Secretaries have been provided with the secure login details and if you are unaware of these, please ask for them. This part of the website is designed to keep brethren updated with details of all masonic functions, in addition to providing news and other information. This will be the means of communication going forward, so please do check it regularly. If you would like to post anything on the website, please send the information either to me or to any other Director.

The masonic year 2022 - 2023 is the third year during which subscriptions have remained unchanged. However, in consequence of generally increased expenses associated with the running of the building, particularly in relation to utility costs, sadly, it is inevitable that these will now need to be increased. Nevertheless, I can assure you that the Board remains ever mindful of the cost of living increases currently being experienced by all of us and such increase in subscriptions will be no greater than is essential to ensure the future of our precious facility.

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### **Chairmans Report 2023**

The Social Committee has again been very active during the last year, for the benefit of all brethren. It held the Group 3 BBQ, together with the recent Burns Night, both of which proved a huge success. Remember Brethren, these events are arranged for you to gather with friends and family for your enjoyment. I do encourage you all to support the social activities whenever you are able. In addition, when your Lodge is considering holding a social function, please get in touch. We all need to support and use the facilities at Ashlar House.

We are delighted to report that Camilla has been appointed Centre Manager on a full-time basis and has taken on additional responsibilities which the role requires and we wish her every success in her new role.

In addition, we must commend Camilla and all the staff, together with William, Kic and their team at Roff Caterers, who continue to work tirelessly to provide service at all the events at Ashlar House.

Recently, you may have seen an article on our website under the Members Section entitled 'The Power of a Volunteer'. If you have not already seen this, I strongly commend it to you. We would like to place on record our grateful thanks to W.Bro. Nick Berry for his time and effort in the restoration of various pieces of Temple furniture and for his ongoing work in this regard. Additionally, W.Bro. Murray Phillips has done a really excellent job of rewriting our Health and Safety Policies. These are absolutely essential for the business, and we are really most grateful to Murray for his commitment.

On the subject of volunteering, I make a heartfelt plea to all Members that use Ashlar House, to please come forward and volunteer for anything which they might feel able to do - general maintenance, small gardening jobs, upkeep of the masonic displays in the Committee room together with the library – anything at all.

If you have any concerns, suggestions or simply comments please, do speak with me or any other Director - we are always ready to listen. Remember Brethren, Ashlar House is a Member's Club and we want you, the members, to be fully engaged and to participate. It is, after all, your Club!

Finally, I must record my personal thanks to the other Directors (Paul Rayner, David Barker and Karl Hott) together with Ian Gray our Treasurer, Mark Dunn the Company Secretary (Group Rep) and Nigel Gregory (Social Committee) for their continuous guidance and support which proves invaluable.

James Orlopp (Chairman)

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