

The quarterly newsletter
of the District Grand
Lodge of the South Island

DEGREES SOUTH

MARCH 2023



FROM THE DGM

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IMPORTANT DATES

- **Installations**
Amberley - April
Phoenix—June
Winchester—June
- **Annual Communications —**
12– 13th May 23.

Brethren,

This is my last opportunity to contribute to the Degrees South Newsletter as your District Grand Master and it's a chance to reflect on the last few years and to thank all of you for the support and encouragement that you have given me during my years in office.

It's a little over seven years since I was appointed Assistant District Grand Master and eighteen months later District Grand Master. In that time I have travelled well over 75,000 kilometres and attended some 411 meetings. I have attended the 300th Celebrations at the Royal Albert Hall in 2017 and also the June 2019 Quarterly Communications at Grand Lodge. I have also been present at two New Zealand Grand Installations, the Installation of a new Irish Provincial Grand Master, the Installation of Jim Ironside as Scottish District Grand Master, sadly subsequently his funeral last year and the Installation of the District Grand Master of the District of the North Island.

During my tenure it hasn't always been smooth sailing. We have encountered the Kaikoura earthquake, the Mosque shootings and, of course, have had to deal with CoVid19. I have to tell you that through the entire seven years I have never once felt unsupported or alone. Wherever I have been it has been an absolute pleasure to represent your District and your Lodges at so many levels and I have been made welcome everywhere I've gone.

I have always kept in mind that the role of a District Grand Master is primarily one of compliance. That it was my responsibility to ensure that the District remained regular, complied with the Rules, Regulations and Landmarks of the Order and to support all thirteen Lodges to enable each of them so to do.

I had a pre-existing concern that the English Constitution was losing its identity in some respects by adopting practices and procedures that emulated those of our Sister Constitutions. Consequently I have encouraged our Lodges to step back from this and maintain a closer adherence to our customs, ritual and traditions which should always shape our **E n g l i s h C o n s t i t u t i o n L o d g e s .** It is also very pleasing that the District Grand Lodge of the South Island grew by 7% last year, an achievement matched by very few Provinces and Districts, for which I take little personal credit. The fact of the matter is that we have the best teams in place at both the Lodge and the District level which give us the best chance of a sustainable future for the South Island English Lodges.

I will be handing over the responsibility for the District to W Bro (soon to be RW Bro) Soper on the eighteenth of May and I would hope that you will all be able to extend the same generous support to John as I myself have enjoyed.

Fraternally,

Richard

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Degrees South Deadline:
May 26th for the June Edition.

SAM CHEW LAIN

Memorial Unveiling Lawrence 18th March 2023

Brethren it was with pleasure that Marie and myself accompanied by Bruce and Marg Russel went down to Lawrence for the unveiling of the Sam Chew Lain memorial which the District Charitable trust supported. The event was held at the Lawrence cemetery where both Sam and his wife are interred in their own mausoleum in the presbyterian area of the cemetery. The overall cost of the restoration was \$45,000.00 which was raised through various avenues including District Grand Lodge Charitable Trust South Island

The ceremony was attended by descendants of both Sam and his wife who travelled long distances to be there. They also gave talks on the legacy he has left them.

Sam was a young Chinese immigrant to NZ when he left his home in China at the age of 15 where he lived in poverty with his mother barely able to feed him, to seek his fortune in the goldfields of the lower South Island. He arrived in NZ and travelled to Lawrence in the 1860s

When he arrived in Lawrence he set up camp in the Chinese settlement at the edge of Lawrence. Having worked a short time in the goldfields Sam decided this was not the life he wanted and started to work within the settlement at the local Chinese hotel. After a while he was offered a 50% share in the premises which he took up. This proved lucrative and over the next few years Sam started to build his empire, mainly within the settlement. He eventually bought out the other 50% of the hotel giving him full ownership. He also built stables for travellers to rest their horses and ended up owning various buildings within the camp. Including building his own home.

Sam was a very charitable person, having experienced poverty at home, he used his wealth to help others, not only the Chinese within the settlement, but also anyone else that needed it. This did not go un-noticed by brethren of the St George lodge which

met in Lawrence. Sam after seeing an add in the Tuapeka times approached the lodge about joining and knowing who he was and the charity that he spread was offered membership, as they considered that he possessed the attributes a mason must hold. Sam continued his charity through the lodge.

He was initiated on 9th February 1889. Passed on the 21st March and raised on 6th April 1889. At this time the lodge met weekly. The Lodge of St George handed in its charter around 1960

His noted name was Lain Samuel C. He died age 55 in 1903 in Lawrence.

The plaque was unveiled at the entrance to his mausoleum by myself and one of Sam's direct descendant

Considering the times, Sam being Chinese, made history in the district by being a good charitable man who owned several business to support his charitable work. He was married to a Scottish girl who had also immigrated with her family from Scotland when she was young. He was accepted by both the Chinese and European communities. He joined the masonic fraternity And was the first Chinese person to be buried outside of the Chinese cemetery.

The trust is continuing its work to now concentrate on the Chinese settlement to restore the settlement to its glory days.

John Soper DDGM

