

Provincial Grand Master's Address to Provincial Grand Lodge - March 2017

Brethren it is now my pleasure to address Provincial Grand Lodge for the fourth time.

Together with other members of the Provincial Executive I have had the pleasure of visiting the Annual Meetings of many Provinces throughout the country, together with the Installation of some new Provincial Grand Masters and I take the opportunity to once more thank them for their kind hospitality, to again extend a warm welcome to them and hope that they enjoy their visit to Surrey.

Indeed Brethren I thank you all for your attendance here today. Our move from the Fairfield Halls was not of our own making and caused a change of date and inevitably a clash with other meetings for some Brethren. I am still delighted to see so many here. It is my sincere hope that you will all enjoy the meeting and the after proceedings.

During the last year, either I, the Deputy Provincial Grand Master or one of the Assistant Provincial Grand Masters have visited every Mark Lodge for their Installation meeting. Indeed there have been occasions when because of a particular celebration we have all been there. Once again I thank the Master and the Brethren of the Lodges for the warm welcome that we have received from you during the year. It is my hope that our attendance, together with the active Provincial Officers has enhanced that Installation for the Master and the Lodge.

To the Provincial Officers who are standing down from office, I thank you for your support for the Province and to me in particular, your support has been exceptional, and in some cases outstanding, and I very much appreciate it.

We live in changing times and in every Province there will be some change each year. I thank W.Bro. Ray Seeley, the Provincial Grand Treasurer for ten years, both for your work as Treasurer in keeping our finances in such good order, but also for your sound advice and assistance as a member of the Provincial Executive Committee. To W.Bro. Trevor Sadler our Provincial Grand Secretary for three years and the Deputy Provincial Grand Secretary prior to that, thank you. During more recent times you have experienced personal challenges and I thank you for your endeavours for the Province throughout. I wish you well in the future and in the coming year as our Provincial Senior Warden.

To the Provincial Officers that I have appointed today I offer you all my sincere congratulations and I trust that you will make the most of and be successful in that appointment. To those who have received active Office I trust that you will make good use of your office and see it as an opportunity. You have been invited to accompany me and the other members of the Provincial Executive on visits to Lodges in the Province. There is no compulsion or requirement to do so, it is an opportunity to visit other Lodges, to provide support to them and increase the enjoyment for us all. Most importantly I hope that that you will enjoy the year ahead. I ask that each of you consider it part of your responsibility to promote our Order and in particular to encourage the younger Brethren.

I thank all of my official representatives who visit Lodges throughout the Province, and whose work is essential to the well running of the Province.

Brethren, I have two key priorities for the coming year. They are -

- Recruitment and the Retention of our members and
- The Mark Benevolent Fund Festival which we will host in 2022.

We launched the Festival from a standing start on 5th May 2016 and I have been delighted with the support that has been demonstrated throughout the Province.

You have heard me say, but it is worth repeating “this is a once in a lifetime opportunity for all of us, as any Province only has the privilege of hosting an MBF Festival approximately every 35 years”.

At the launch I asked you to consider a drip drip approach to giving, where at the start we had an empty bath which, come July 2022, will be full. I emphasised that in the first year we should sign up as many of our members to continuous giving, with the expectation that “mighty oaks from small acorns grow”. Brethren you haven’t let me down and we still have almost another six weeks to meet that immediate challenge. Thank you to those who have signed up to continuous giving or made substantial one off gifts, as a thank you a gold pin is available for your lapel. If you haven’t yet signed up, please give it your consideration.

Our Festival Committee is well established under the Chairmanship of W.Bro. David Else and I thank him and all the members of the Committee for their continuing hard work.

On 6th May the Mark Benevolent Fund is organising a sponsored Walk which is to follow the Diana Princess of Wales Memorial Walk. Our Province will be represented on that eight mile walk by a team of six led by myself, together with the two Assistant Provincial Grand Masters, W.Bros. Chris Eley and John French, the Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies, W.Bro. Richard Knox, the Secretary of the 2022 Committee, W.Bro. Bill Barr, and our Web Master VW.Bro. Bob Tuthill. Teams had to be restricted to six for each Province but your support is welcome, as supporters along the route encouraging the less athletic or in Stewarding. W.Bro. Bernie Greenwood would be pleased to hear from you if you are able to a Steward on that day.

At the outset the Pro Grand Master hoped that we could raise in the region of £100,000, which he said would be a fantastic boost to fund raising efforts for the next major worthy cause. We are still 8 weeks away and the total now exceeds £140,000, of which Surrey has thus far donated £7,000. Thank you to all those Lodges and individuals who have given so generously and I am aware that there are other donations in the pipe line. Donations can be made online and credit cards can be used. “MBF Charity Walk.” In the search engine will bring up the site.

The MBF reaches its sesqui centenary next year by which time the MBF will have donated £2.6m to Hope for Tomorrow. The next worthy cause is to be St John Ambulance, which around the Millennium received a significant contribution to replace its fleet of ambulances. A pledge of just over £3m has been made enabling a two year programme providing 52 replacement state of the art ambulances and support vehicles.

In January I had the pleasure to visit the Installation meeting of Oak Tree Mark Lodge at Bisley and to present a Mark Benevolent Fund Grand Patron Gold collarette to the Worshipful Master, the first to a Lodge in Surrey. An acknowledgement of the generous donations made to the MBF by this Mark Lodge. Whilst this is a first for a Lodge in the Province there have been a number awarded and presented to Individuals. Well done to you all.

Today we have launched the Bonus Ball, as a fun way of raising funds for the MBF. This will operate on a weekly basis, based upon the National Lottery Saturday Night draw. I am indebted to W.Bro. Steve Guzy for undertaking to run this initiative. Tickets for the First Draw are on sale from today.

Please give the recruiting of new Brethren your utmost attention. Tell Brethren in your Craft Lodges and in your Royal Arch Chapters how much you enjoy your Mark Masonry and make sure they know that they are missing out on knowledge and a great deal of enjoyment. I encourage you

all to support your Craft Lodges and Royal Arch Chapters at the same time remember that they are also our Recruiting grounds. We have held and will continue to hold "Mark meets the Craft" evenings in our Mark Lodges. However one to one discussion is often the most fruitful way of introducing new members to our wonderful Order.

I and members of the Executive are working on a revised recruitment strategy and I thank those who have had an input to date.

I am particularly pleased to have had the opportunity to welcome some of the Newly Advanced Brethren to our meeting today. I thank you all for your attendance, wear your pin with pride and most importantly enjoy your Mark masonry.

Brethren you saw the Provincial Keystone brought into Provincial Grand Lodge today by the Master of Noel Lodge and you heard me say that its purpose is to encourage visiting and promote the exchange of goodwill and fellowship between Lodges in the Province. It has had a most successful launch, and at the Festive Board it will be presented to the Lodge that has the most members dining today. I can tell you that there were several Lodges in contention. I take this opportunity to thank W.Bro. John French and VW.Bro. Bob Tuthill for bringing this idea to fruition.

The Inter Province Cricket Match will be hosted by Surrey this year at a new venue, Walcountians Sports Ground at Banstead, on Sunday 16th July. Please give it your support and bring members of your family, there will certainly be other entertainment as well as watching the cricket. I am very hopeful that W.Bro. Peter Unwin will have his helicopter available at the ground. I thank W Bro Roy Baker for stepping up to the mark to organise the event this year and his Committee for all the work that they have put into what promises to be a fun day. Programmes for the event are on sale today and I thank the members, businesses and Lodges that have sponsored the event.

The Annual Charity Dinner Dance is to be held at the Burford Bridge Hotel on Friday 1st April. W.Bro. Miguel Godfrey and W.Bro. Mick Mello have put in a lot of work already. Numbers are rising but we can accommodate a few more. It promises to be an enjoyable evening, so speak to Miguel if you haven't already booked.

W.Bro. Ian Parsons the Secretary of the Mess has arranged the Annual meeting of the Officers Mess which will be held at Guildford Masonic Centre on Tuesday 9th May 2017. The Guest Speaker is Dr John Bevan and his talk is entitled "Commander Crabb - What Really Happened". I hope you will support, particularly those newly appointed.

Congratulations to those appointed to or promoted in Grand Rank by the MW Grand Master at Investiture of Mark Grand Lodge in June 2016

W.Bro. Peter Unwin, as Grand Steward,
VW.Bro. Peter Rubie-Todd as Past Grand Master Overseer,
VW.Bros. Chris Cradock and Bob Tuthill as Past Grand Junior Overseers,
W.Bro. Laurie Young as Past Grand Senior Deacon,
W.Bros. Terry Carpenter and Louis Keats as Past Grand Junior Deacons,
W.Bro. Derek Harrington as Past Assistant Grand Director of Ceremonies,
W.Bro. Ian Smith as Past Assistant Grand Sword Bearer.

In December the MW Grand Master appointed five Brethren to Grand Rank in the Ancient and Honourable Fraternity of Royal Ark Mariners. They were W.Bros. Barrie Freeman, Derek Harrington, Jack Love, Ian Parsons and Ian Smith. All well deserved appointments, congratulations to them all.

I am unable to give you any details today of those to be Appointed and Invested to Grand Rank in June because those Brethren have not yet been notified. However I have already congratulated

RW.Bro. Steve Davison on his promotion to Assistant Grand Master and at that meeting RW.Bro. Ray Smith will become the Pro Grand Master and RW.Bro. John Prizeman the Assistant Grand Master will be promoted to Deputy Grand Master. This will be a very special occasion which I encourage you to attend and those wishing to do so are requested to put in their application early. It is always an enjoyable afternoon.

W. Bro John Coleman our Provincial Grand Almoner is selling new and re-cycled regalia for the benefit of the Provincial Benevolent Fund, so if you require regalia he has a stock or alternatively if you have aprons, collars or badges that you no longer require he will be pleased to receive them from you. He has already raised in excess of £1,000 and I thank him most sincerely.

Good communication is vital. The Provincial Web site contains a vast amount of information and news and I thank our Web Master, VW.Bro. Bob Tuthill, and his Assistant for all the work that goes in keeping it up to date. Brethren, it is your web site, please use it and the information contained on it. The Overseer continues to be an excellent publication and I hope that you like the pages that we have purchased in the Surrey Mason. I also thank W.Bro. Chris Eley for his work on publicity, communication and his camera work.

Events such as an Annual Meeting don't just happen, particularly in a new venue. To the Provincial Grand Secretary and the rest of the Provincial Secretariat I thank you for all the hard work you have put into making today run so smoothly. To the Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies, his Deputies and Assistants, I am grateful to the whole team in ensuring that the day is a success. I thank the members of the Provincial Grand Stewards Lodge for their tremendous support today and throughout the year. I am most grateful to you all.

Finally I am indebted to my Executive and every member of the Executive Committee who continue to give outstanding service to the Province and support to me personally. It is a great privilege to continue to serve the Province.

I thank you all for the kind attention that you have given to my address and may the Great Overseer of the Universe Bless and Keep you.

Ian N Clark
Provincial Grand Master
18th March 2017