

## **Grand Superintendent's address 23rd. October 2004**

The printer of the Provincial Yearbook agreed with my colleagues that I spoke for too long last year. He printed only one page of the four I sent in!

Welcome to 150th. Anniversary meeting but this is not the 150th. Provincial Grand Chapter. There were no Provincial meetings from 1854 to 1858. There were meetings in 1859, when a new Grand Superintendent was installed, and 1860 but two in a row seems to have exhausted him and it was not until 1867 that another was held. For some reason 1874 was also missed.

So! Welcome to the 138th. meeting in our 150th. year.

Our guests have already been individually introduced to you and I shall confine myself to a formal personal welcome to them all. We appreciate your coming and in such large numbers. We hope you find our proceedings enjoyable.

As always we are well supported by the Rulers of other Orders in the Province. Our Provincial Grand Master, Richard Anderson is here with Jeffrey Gillyon his Deputy and two Assistant John Trout and the other one I saw somewhere. Eric Gore-Brown, Provincial Grand Master of the Mark Degree is accompanied by his Deputy, Frank Woolgrove and his Assistant PGM David Crofts. Peter Donnison is Deputy Grand High Priest of the Knights Templar Priests and Maurice Oversby is Grand Superintendent for this District of that Order. Michael Carr is Inspector General of the Rose Croix District, Geoffrey Salter is Provincial Prior of the Knights Templar. Finally, congratulations to David Fox the newly installed Intendant – General of the Red Cross of Constantine.

I congratulate the newly appointed and promoted officers. The whole structure of Provincial honours allocations are being significantly altered next year with more “active” ranks available. Promotions, which hitherto have been at the discretion of Grand Superintendents, are to be allocated on a scale of 80% of first appointments allowed. It will result, I am afraid in the scope to promote Companions beyond their first appointment being much less easy.

I am sure that you have been admiring the splendid sceptres which we are using today. They are the gift of the Provincial Grand Stewards Chapter and I am grateful to them for their generosity in thus marking our 150th. year. Companion Harry Collier of Erimus Chapter 3474 has made a handsome stand for them which will be used during the closing ceremony. Companion Pinder of Marwood Chapter 602 has made this elegant lectern for my use. The collecting bowls for the Alms are also newly minted and the work of .....

The small drop in membership reported after last year's rise is disappointing but 21 of our Chapters increased their membership and 10 broke even. One Chapter decreased by 7 members two by 5 and another by 4 but the rest by only one or two each. The 21 members lost in these four Chapters was responsible for pushing us into deficit. Best news of all is that exaltations exceeded resignations for the first time in 12 years and were over 100 (actually 104) for the first time since 1995. We are modestly

prospering therefore but we must not cease efforts to meet Masonry's greatest challenge – retaining the interest of younger and newer members.

I was going to remind you that at my Installation in 2002 I had the original thought that we must avoid the uninspired “to rehearse a ceremony” in favour of more imaginative fare. It would have been an original thought if Dr. John Pearson Bell our third Grand Superintendent had not had it first and said so to this meeting in 1877. I agree with him however. Some Chapters have heeded the message but others continue to rehearse ceremonies. They will not prosper with that sort of a diet and will not deserve to.

Yet another original idea I thought I launched this year proves to be unoriginal. It is to receive an Annual Report from each of our Chapters. Our second Grand Superintendent, George Marwood, introduced the practice 1860 but it fell by the wayside at some point. Anyway, I lifted the idea from the Provinces of Cumberland and Westmorland and Lincolnshire who have been doing it for years. I DID have one original idea – I think. That was to address a personal invitation to a group of newly exalted Companions to attend this Provincial meeting. They are over there in the South. Can I ask them to stand whilst you give them tumultuous applause ?

The way we oldies speak of the Annual meeting can give the impression that it is not relevant to younger and newer members. We must alter this impression. The Annual meeting is for all members not merely those with Provincial Collars. Those Companions I have just introduced are our future. The rest of us are its present and those not here, sadly, probably represent its past. I hope that their experience of this meeting will lead our new exaltees present to come back in future on a regular basis. The PGM's Festival is being well supported in many of our Chapters. A recent donation to come to my notice was when my Representative, Companion Griff. Hatton, received a cheque £1000 from Companion John Blenkiron, the First Principal of Lennox Chapter 123 three weeks ago. Part of that £1000 was the proceeds of an enjoyable Garden Party at John's home which Ann and I attended in August on virtually the only dry day in that month. Huntcliff head the Chapter contribution list with £3231.57. A slight pause whilst our Provincial Grand Master bursts with pride ! 45 of our 55 Chapters have made Almoner appointments but only 32 have appointed Charity Stewards. I expect the rest – whose names I have carefully noted - to do so this year. I will say no more than this. If these Chapters expect support from me then I expect them fully to support Royal Arch Masonry in return.

A number of special events to mark the 150th. Anniversary have already been held or will happen shortly

My surgical incapacity to attend the 150th. Anniversary Family Fun Day at Kirkby Sigston so admirably organised by Companion Derek Pinder and his helpers was my loss according to enthusiastic reports received.

Another will be a mass attendance of our members at the November meeting at Supreme Grand Chapter after which we shall lunch together at the Freemasons' Arms in Long Acre.

A Dinner at York Racecourse on November 27th. is open to all Companions and their wives or partners. We are promised a sparkling evening with our guest speaker Gabriela. My wife has made the enigmatic comment to me “she will go down very well with the Fellers”! Companions. Tickets are still available !!!

The 150th. Anniversary tie is selling well. The competition was anonymous. The best design won. The fact that it was submitted new Third Principal, David Scott, merely proves how cleverly I spot latent talent. Congratulations David.

An important point about our new tie. It is strictly for wear within this Province. You must not wear it when in other Provinces or when visiting Supreme Grand Chapter. The commemorative plate is also now available and I was glad to see a number being clutched by Companions entering the Hall today.

At the next meeting of Supreme Grand Chapter we shall hear the outcome of the deliberations over the report of the Strategic Working Party on the Royal Arch. I was grateful for all of the thought and effort put in by all but one of our Chapters in commenting on the first draft of the Report. The frequency of remarks like “Babies and Bathwater”, “It ain’t broke so why fix it”, “why re-fudge a fudge” and “these proposals will damage the Order” gave even such a slow thinker as me the impression that you did not like what you saw – which sentiment I passed on with my hearty endorsement. I can only hope that the true spirit of Masonry will prevail and that we are let into Supreme Grand Chapter on November 10th.

It will be interesting to see the outcome but we have already been told that whatever is approved will be almost wholly discretionary. Only “26 words” we are told will be mandatory. All will be revealed on November 10th.

At Supreme Grand Chapter Investiture meeting in April M. E. Comp. Iain Bryce was reappointed as Second Grand Principal for the thirteenth time. Our Second Provincial Principal, Nigel Steel, was honoured with the active rank of Grand Standard Bearer, Companion Brain Baker became a Past Grand Standard Bearer and Leslie Welsh Past Assistant Grand Director of Ceremonies. Our retiring Second Principal, Derek Broderick, was promoted to Past Assistant Grand Sojourner and Howard Beber to Past Grand Standard Bearer. Congratulations to them all.

Sadly we have lost 60 through death this year including 3 Supreme Grand Chapter Officers E. Companions George Stephen Bowers PGStB who was Second Provincial Grand Principal from 1982-1984, Patrick David Waters PAGSoj and George Alfred Cooper PGStB together with 25 Officers of Provincial Grand Chapter. We have all been touched by sadness in respect of one or more of these Companions this year and will have our own special memories of them at this time.

As ever my thanks for their support are due to many people. To the Deputy Grand Superintendent, Alan Brundall, who works tremendously hard and, most importantly, knows when to say “No” to me which he does - frequently. Derek Broderick retires on rotation as Second Provincial Grand Principal. Derek and I have worked together on Masonic administration for 14 consecutive years with never a cross word. He knows how much I have appreciated his support and his friendship over those years. Long may it continue. Our new Second and Third Principals have earned their preferment

by their zeal and energy. I welcome Bruce Harrison as Assistant to the Principals and rejoice that his post as Deputy Director of Ceremonies has been accepted by another hard working Mason, John Barlow.

I said last year I was apprehensive that the standards achieved by the active Officers might not be possible to maintain in the incoming group. I need not have worried. If anything they have exceeded expectations. Thanks are due their support in making so many visits with the Rulers are difficult to express adequately.

To The Provincial Grand Scribe E Brian Baker and our Assistant John Halliwell go grateful thanks as well as to the Linda and Anthea ever cheerful in the Office – and that takes some doing sometimes. Our Treasurer, Peter Carlton-Scott sends me monthly reports on our finances which he tries manfully to make happy reading. It is not his fault if he sometimes fails. Terry Burt our Almoner does great work very quietly keeping in touch with people who are ill or otherwise afflicted. Finally, to my Director of Ceremonies, Keith Buckham, for his ever cheerful and efficient support. Bruce Harrison and Derek Pinder have effectively supported Keith. Thanks to them also.

Finally, finally thank you all of you for being here in such numbers and for being enthusiastic and committed Royal Arch Masons

I shall now shut up to await the usual curses from my colleagues for going on too long as usual