

The Provincial Grand Masters Address to Provincial Grand Lodge Saturday 15 May 2010

I quote “In a world where men do battle over whose definition of God is most accurate, I cannot adequately express the deep respect and admiration I feel toward an organisation in which men of differing faiths are able to ‘break bread together’ in a bond of brotherhood, friendship and camaraderie”

This Brethren was written by the Dan Brown the author of the Lost Symbol to the US Masonic Leaders and seems to me to be the accolade of 2009. Recognition of this quality can never be substituted by TV advertising or any other self generated publicity.

OK so his book suggests that we drink blood out of skulls but remember the book is a novel. The letter was an unsolicited testimonial

Let me extend to you all a warm welcome. I doubt if more than a few of you are as pleased to be here as I am. In May last year, although I did not know it, I had Prostate Cancer. In May of this year – today – I do not have Prostate Cancer. I am truly pleased to be here. I will talk more in this topic at the Provincial Grand Charity Annual Meeting later

The principal reason for most of you to be here today is to support those brethren of your Lodges that have been appointed or promoted. It is a very special day for them and I am sure you will join with me in congratulating all those newly appointed or promoted Provincial Officers that I have invested today (*applause*)

Today we loose a stalwart – a Brother who has served this Province with dedication and commitment. Terry Burt has acted as Almoner first in the Royal Arch for 4 years and then in the craft for the last 4 years and has assisted many of our Brethren often in most distressing and difficult circumstances. But just to prove the saying if you want something doing properly ask a busy man Terry took over as Festival Secretary in 2003 from Jeff Gillyon who told him that there would be nothing to do as he had set it all up. Was that an understatement!! Terry seemed to be everywhere for those 3 years wherever I went he was there or had been the previous meeting. Terry we thank you for sharing your special talents with us and wish you good health in the years to come (*applause*)

We loose another hard working Brother today. The secretary of our Masonic Complaints Committee for the last 16 years has been WBro Strick Carter and I wish to thank him for his services over that very long period. (*applause*).

As an aside it was Strick who had the misfortune of backing his car into mine in a car park in Leyburn in front of many witnesses.

Today the old team of active Provincial Officers retire and I take this opportunity to thank them for their support to me, the Rulers and my representatives over the last twelve months. Team visits continue to be a great success and are welcomed by the Lodges. I must also thank all those who have represented me both Grand Officers and Past Wardens and the top trio of Wardens and Registrar. I appreciate your enthusiasm and commitment to the Province

In recent years via the Rulers Forum Group the Rulers and senior members of the Northern Provinces have had some opportunity to meet and discuss issues of the moment. These meetings tend to be somewhat formalised and it is therefore a delight to for me to welcome as distinguished guests my fellow Provincial Grand Masters all of whom are supported by their Executive colleagues.

From Yorkshire West Riding – a good friend of this Province John Clayton

From Northumberland as far North as you can go – Peter Magnay

From Lincolnshire who we visited on Wednesday – Graham Ives

From Durham with a Festival in September – Eric Heaviside

And from Cumberland and Westmorland without his wellies – Norman Thompson

We are also pleased to have a deputation from East Lancashire

While expressing welcomes I am sure you would all wish to give special recognition to our own Past Provincial Grand Master John Raylor

Brethren our next Festival is not until 2018 but I can tell you that it is for the Masonic Samaritan Fund and will not be launched for a while yet. However not on a fact finding mission but just come to see us I am delighted to be able to welcome to our meeting

The President of the Masonic Samaritan Fund, VWBro Hugh Stubbs.

Hugh it is great to have you with us and we look forward to working with your team in the years ahead. (*applause*)

We also welcome back your Deputy W Bro James Bartlett

We have with us a number of Heads of Other Orders but perhaps first a welcome for the Deputy Grand Superintendent of the Royal Arch John Trout

Then the Provincial Grand Master of the Mark – Eric Gore-Brown

The Inspector General of the Rose Croix – Michael Graham

The Provincial Grand Supreme Ruler of the Secret Monitor – Dennis Slights

And the newly appointed Grand Superintendent of the Knights Templar Priests,
David Scott.

You all have busy diaries and I am therefore delighted that you have been able to join us today

Just two weeks ago we had a very happy contingent at the Annual Investiture in London We were pleased to witness the Grand Master promote both Bill Fisher and David Marsh to PSJD and Clive Wood to PAGDC

He appointed Stephen Robinson and Roderick Taylor to PAGDC

Likewise both Denis Clough and Les Sinden to PGStB

And finally a special moment when Phillip Gillyon a Yorkshire North & East Riding mason was appointed a Grand Steward as a Past Master of Lodge No 26 in London (*applause*)

I am delighted to report that in this year we have finally succeeded in getting the newsletter – The Yorkshire Mason - delivered to your homes instead of being used as door stops in the Masonic halls around the Province. This I predicted last year but was not certain that we could make it happen. Likewise early this year we not only got the second home delivery newsletter to you but the Year Book as well and the summons for this meeting which went to every member. The next newsletter will be distributed in early July and will contain the summons for the Royal Arch Convocation in September.

The leader of the team who achieved this success was Barry Hill of Ferrum Lodge who acted as Editor and everything else together with Vic Thomson of Sykes Lodge. Vic advised on the best method for sending the Yorkshire Mason to every member's home address. His experience, gained from when he had his own Mailing House Company, was invaluable. Let's congratulate and thank them both (*applause*)

Our finances appear to be in good order and once again there is no need to raise the Provincial dues and just for this year we have not raised the honours fee. The virtual office is now running smoothly but we will need to invest in or upgrade the technology as we start to look at life without cheques but that is a challenge for the future

Brethren today does not just happen. I thank the Provincial Grand Stewards Lodge - and the Stewards Chapter as well - for providing cover for so many important duties. The planning process is in the hands of the Secretariat lead by our Provincial Secretary Brian Baker and his team, including Gerald Gelder dealing with all the seating arrangements, and I am sure you would want to join with me in thanking them all. (*applause*)

Likewise the ceremonial has been in the safe hands of the Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies and his team of Deputies, Assistants and Stewards and we thank them all for their patience and guidance in delivering a splendid meeting (*applause*)

So what about the future after the push from Dan Brown to create a much greater awareness of Freemasonry

There are many initiatives currently taking place including the UGLE website that is producing a daily list of enquiries about membership. The University Lodge scheme in which two Lodges in this Province are full members and another is in the initial stages. These Lodges are producing a steady stream of graduate and undergraduate entrants. But there are a good number of other Lodges in this Province who are handling multiple ceremonies to cope with their intake of new members.

I suggest that the society of today lives in a seemingly increasing moral vacuum, a space which freemasonry, with its Grand Principals of Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth, can fill and to which young intelligent men can look for inspiration, self improvement and fulfilment. I venture to suggest Brethren they are already doing so and we must not fail them. **Let us open our doors to more like minded men – men who will secure the future of Freemasonry rather than just adding to our numbers**

Thank you all for being here today. I hope the Grand Design of Freemasonry continues to guide your thoughts, words and deeds – please always continue to be happy and communicate happiness - with a smile.

God bless you all