

## **Summary of the Provincial Grand Master's Address** **to Provincial Grand Lodge 2011**

Let me as always welcome all of you to this our Annual Meeting. I am aware that many of you are regular attenders and I welcome you back once again. Many of you will be here perhaps for the first time as newly appointed Provincial Officers who have come with friends also for the first time and you are all most welcome.

We place much emphasis that Provincial Grand Lodge is open to Master Masons and is not a private event for masters and past masters. So my special welcome goes to the Master Masons who are with us. So special is that welcome that I would invite all Master Masons to stand up and be recognised.

There are no special events on today's Agenda and no rabbits for me to pull out of hats but this does not detract in any way from the importance of our annual gathering to conduct our routine but important business to hear about the work of our own Provincial Grand Charity to invest newly appointed and promoted Provincial Officers to say farewell to a number of hard working office holders and to welcome the new team. Some years these important tasks have been conducted in some haste with time pressures and I have enjoyed having the opportunity to speak with everyone in a more leisurely fashion today.

**What does the Province do?** Among other things we offer Lodges many different Workshops and other presentations which provide training opportunities for Lodge Officers, information for new members and general information for all members on subjects as diverse as Masonic Charity, Prostate Awareness, the Provincial Lecturer and Orations. We are about to hold, for the first time, a workshop on the running of Masonic buildings.

These are opportunities only and attendance is certainly not compulsory but they are, nevertheless, well attended and well received. They form an integral part of my belief that **Province is there to help**. This can also be seen in other ways; for example those brethren who visit Lodges as my Representatives are available to help and offer guidance to those Lodges throughout the year. In the same way, the Provincial Secretariat is always available to do likewise, so please do look upon Province as being at hand for you in cases of difficulty and as a resource.

Providing help to others is of course not something that is exclusive to Province - it should be second nature to us all as Freemasons. You display this characteristic in abundance in your Lodges with the work that the Almoner carries out to relieve the hardship and suffering of members and their families, but I believe we should perhaps go further.

It is natural for us to feel sympathy for a brother suffering from ill health or, as the Address in the North East Corner says, circumstances of unavoidable calamity and misfortune. But what about our brethren who, for whatever reason, do not live up to the high standards we demand. Do we sometimes forget those words in the Address to the Brethren which say that we learn, among other things, to drop a tear of sympathy over the failings of a Brother? **That is Freemasonry caring.**

Hard work is not just done at Provincial level, with so many workers in every Lodge unsung and unrecognised - go back and think about who in your Lodge is always helping - find a way to thank them- send flowers to their wives or partners - do something to show why Freemasonry cares

Today is really for those who have just been invested or promoted along with their friends who are here to support them. To the new appointees I congratulate you but you each have two jobs to do. One is to conscientiously carry out the duties of your office whether active or past rank. People will look to you for precept and example. The other is to show that Freemasonry cares - Diplomacy - a tear of sympathy – guidance is more likely to succeed than instruction. All of us will be judged by your attitude your tolerance and your understanding in your respective Lodges. Provincial rank is not an entitlement it is a privilege treat it as such

As we move towards 2017 and the celebration of 300 years of the Craft an event that will be the biggest gathering ever of Freemasons from all over the world as they come to celebrate with us the Mother Grand Lodge we need to be able to talk to the world's press about what we are, what we do and why we do it.

**Brethren Freemasonry is not a charity:** Some years ago we never told the world about the money that we gave to our Masonic Charities even though they gave significant amounts to non-Masonic causes. I did not join because I saw it is an opportunity to give money to charity – there are plenty of organisations - splendid organisations that enable me to do that.

When Freemasonry was under fire from the press and the media it was a natural and sensible step to open our doors and find a theme “Charitable giving” that would be well received by the public and give us a sense of satisfaction in a hard environment. The world has moved on now and I have a fear that we have and are recruiting new members who are joining us with the thought that we are a charity because of the recent unrelenting emphasis on the charity aspects of our activities.

**So I ask, “What is Freemasonry?”** – Perhaps a peculiar system of morality, veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols - no mention of charity

You all know the Grand Principles on which it is founded - Brotherly love relief and truth - no mention of charity.

What the above philosophy suggests is that we care – **FREEMASONRY CARES** and Charity is a by-product of caring.

**What is Freemasonry?** The author Julian Rees suggests that although there is a marked social dimension to Freemasonry, the ancient art is more than that. Freemasonry requires a degree of commitment: not so much in time or money, as a commitment to its ideals, ideals of brotherhood, of humility, of unity, of morality, of mutuality, of humanity and of tolerance. Freemasonry is there to promote these ideals and it does so in a way that is free from religious doctrine or political or ideological persuasion

I am a freemason - I am proud to be a freemason – and I am proud to tell anyone that I am a freemason and that I care - I care about my family - my friends - my fellow freemasons and indeed, all those less fortunate than we are.

Brethren - it is a delight for me to be your Provincial Grand Master  
May the Great Architect of the Universe keep you safe – thank you.