

The Provincial Grand Masters Address

to Provincial Grand Lodge

Saturday 16 May 2009

Brethren you will be pleased to hear that in view of the fullness of the Agenda today that I am not going to address you for very long.

You do not need to look quite so pleased!!!

As always but most importantly I extend to every one of you a warm welcome.

If this is the first Provincial Grand Lodge meeting you have attended I hope that you have not been disappointed.

To the large number of you who come every year I thank you for your continued support

Of course the reason for many of you to be here today is to support those brethren of your Lodges who have been appointed or promoted.

It is a very special day for them and I am sure you will all join with me in congratulating all those newly appointed or promoted Provincial Officers that I have invested today (*applause*)

I am grateful for the support that the team of active Provincial Officers gave to me, the Rulers and my representatives in various ways over the last year. I thank all those who represented me both Grand Officers and the top team of the Wardens and Registrar and appreciate your enthusiasm and commitment to the Province.

On my appointment as a very new Provincial Grand Master in 2003 I started in the pecking order as no 47 In just six years without doing anything, but staying alive, I shall have seen 39 new Provincial Grand Masters appointed after me. Four of them are here this morning and I am pleased to welcome them without disclosing their ages.

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

From Lincolnshire who we visited on Wednesday Graham Ives

From Durham the big guy Eric Heaviside

And from Cumberland and Westmorland another ProvGDC made good Norman Thompson

We are also pleased to have deputations from both Northumberland and from East Lancashire

While expressing welcomes I would ask you to recognise a number of Heads of Other Orders but perhaps first a welcome for a real hard worker - the Deputy Grand Superintendent of the Royal Arch Alan Brundall

Then - a good friend - the Provincial Grand Master of the Mark Eric Gore-Brown

The recently appointed Inspector General of Rose Croix Michael Graham

And belatedly Paul Darley the Provincial Prior of Knights Templar

And finally I ask you to recognise the recently invested or promoted Grand Officers

I am pleased to report that we had a very large contingent of supporters in London at the end of last month to see John Davies our ProvGDC receive an acting rank of AGDC, Tony Hayes, Recorder of KTP worldwide, acting rank of AGStdB, David Greendale as PAGDC, Nigel Steel as PGStdB and Nick Varey promoted to PJGD

Congratulations to them all (*applause*)

We have had an exciting and busy year which started the day after the spectacular end here last year to the Air Ambulance Appeal.

We have, sometimes to our amazement, managed without a Provincial Office since last June and I was pleased to see the cost savings beginning to show in the Accounts despite some significant costs in setting up the server system, Invu the document management software and a telephone link between the secretarial team.

We still have to launch the Provincial Local Area Network which is being worked on right now and I hope will be made available to all Lodges and Chapters before the end of this year.

The next Year Book, slimmed down, and future Newsletters enhanced somewhat are now to be distributed direct to your homes.

This cost can be covered out of the savings from going Virtual and still allow us to freeze the rate of annual dues for the second time. This is particularly important in the unprecedented financial upheaval that every sector of our society is suffering.

I would like to record my thanks to the hard working Lodge Secretary's for helping us to get the address list up to date. Yes there will be teething problems with some of you getting more than one and some of you not getting any copy but I ask for your patience as we refine the data we have available.

It is amazing how many people move house and do not tell anyone.

This year we were asked by Lord Northampton now Past Pro Grand Master to participate in the Historical Records Project. On the surface this was not the most exciting of schemes but vital and essential to the work just starting in preparation for our 300 year anniversary in 2017.

I certainly picked the right Brother to lead it forward for Yorkshire North and East. He has been a dynamo and while he was disappointed that we were not the first to finish the task we have submitted over 92% of our returns and were ranked second on the printout recently made available.

Please join with me in thanking Les Sinden of North York Lodge for his efforts and enthusiasm. Well done Les (*applause*)

Training and education have remained important topics during the year.

In addition to the several educational presentations available to Lodges including the Orator Scheme (*I am pleased to report that David Burnett is now fit and well again and has some interesting material to enthral and interest you when you have no ceremony*), we also have training initiatives for Lodge Secretaries, Directors of Ceremonies, Almoners, Charity Stewards and Mentors and, now, workshops for Masters Elect and Wardens.

These last workshops were devised by the Provincial Training and Education Officer, Ian Sugarman, and presented for the first time in four venues in September and October. They proved very popular and will, therefore, be repeated in five venues in the autumn.

At the Worshipful Masters' Dinner in March those present were asked to name their fears and concerns going into, and after taking, the Chair; the workshops this year will be adapted as necessary to take into account the useful feedback from these responses

We will continue to provide opportunities such as these so that brethren may better understand freemasonry and, so, get the most out of it and enjoy it to the utmost.

Brethren as some of you will be aware I was privileged last year to be appointed by the Grand Master to the Board of General Purposes as one of only three Provincial Grand Masters entitled to a seat on that Board. In the short time that I have been a member I have learnt much about the relationship between the various parts of our organisation.

Apart from constitutional issues in which I as Provincial Grand Master have very significant powers and authority everything else is based on the consent of the Brethren.

This is an important understanding that needs to be appreciated by everyone. I do not dictate!! All the initiatives that we take and promote, all the groups that we encourage to meet, all the communications that are issued and I admit that there are many only have one aim – that is to provide opportunities.

Nothing more!!!!

We will continue to provide those opportunities in many and varied fields of development and in doing so would hope to gain the general consent of the Brethren.

It is not a good analogy but I see my position as the holder of a franchise called Provincial Grand Lodge of Yorkshire North and East Ridings and if you want to be a member of the franchise you have to accept the house rules even when not always enamoured by some issues

Let me put on record however that there are a number of circumstances when a Provincial Grand Master has the constitutional right to grant dispensations on behalf of the Grand Master.

Never ever assume that such a dispensation is a foregone conclusion or a right. If it was then the provision for such a dispensation would not be needed.

Brethren - in addition to thanking the many working members of the Stewards Lodge also supported by the Chapter Stewards - I am sure that you would want me to thank Brian Baker our Provincial Grand Secretary and his team for all the arrangements for today's meeting (*applause*)

Likewise running today's meeting for the first time John Davies the Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies and his team – well done to them (*applause*)

Let me finish with a reminder to us all.

When you go home, sometime over the weekend (what's left of it) read the charge after initiation.

Right at the end ask yourself "Have you indelibly imprinted on your heart the sacred dictates of TRUTH - of HONOUR - and of VIRTUE"?

God bless you all