

Address delivered by R.W.Bro. James Stegges, Provincial Grand Master at the Provincial Meeting, Saturday, 13th April

Well Brethren, I was hoping to say today, welcome to the first Provincial Meeting after 'Brexit'. Unfortunately not the case Brethren but I know this is one part of the meeting you've all been waiting for. But as the Grand Secretary will also be addressing us later today, I'm sure you'll also be pleased to know that I have purposely kept it brief or at least a little briefer than normal brethren.

So could I start by extending a right Yorkshire welcome to our Assistant Grand Master, R.W.Bro. Stephen Davison, and to the Grand Secretary, R.W.Bro. Ryan Williams. It's good to have you both with us brethren, and we hope you have a very enjoyable day. Our guests from Other Provinces were introduced to you individually as they entered today brethren and on your behalf I also extend to them a very warm welcome to West Yorkshire. Our meeting this year clashes with the Annual Meeting of the Craft Province of Derbyshire, and some of our usual stalwart supporters, including the Provincial Grand Master, R.W.Bro. David Pratt, are unable to be with us today, but we are still well supported from the Craft and Other Masonic Orders and I would ask them to stand as I introduce them to you.

From the Craft, we are delighted to have two of our Assistant Provincial Grand Masters, both of whom were only appointed in January this year, W.Bro. Andrew Wright, a past S.W. of our Mark Province, and Ian Lewis, our newly appointed Senior Warden today. Congratulations to you both, brethren and I think their continued involvement with the Mark demonstrates the very close relationship we have with the Craft as well as with all the other Orders in this Province brethren. Also from the Craft, we are delighted to have with us the Past Deputy Provincial Grand Master, Jack Pigott and three Past Assistant Provincial Grand Masters, V.W.Bro. Robbie Scorer, Rodney Tolson and Tony Llewellyn. And Tony has just stepped down from being Intendant General in the Red Cross of Constantine.

From the Holy Royal Arch we have, the Grand Superintendant Stewart Carley and the past Deputy Grand Superintendant, Jim Gray, also Past Deputy Grand Superintendants, Gerald Wilde and John Briggs from the Order of the Secret Monitor, we have the Deputy Provincial Supreme Ruler, Alan Webster, and the Past Deputy, John Marrison. And John is also Provincial Grand Summus for the Order of the Scarlet Cord. From the Allied Masonic Degrees we have the Past Deputy Grand Master, Brian Price, the District Grand Prefect, David Cordell, the newly appointed Deputy District Grand Prefect, Graham Bailey, and the Past Deputy District Grand Prefects, Gerry Barker and Sam Cariss.

From the Royal and Select Masters, the District Grand Master, David Cordell, the Deputy District Grand Master, Ron Murtagh, and the Past Deputy, John Loat and from

the Knight Templar Priests, we have the Past Grand Superintendent, Godfrey Bedford.

Finally, from the Royal Order of Scotland, the Past Provincial Grand Master, Sam Brown. Brethren, if I have missed anyone I do apologise, and I now think all our guests deserve our applause.

Brethren, you will have seen from the Provincial Grand Secretaries Report that it's been another very busy year. A year in which we Dedicated a new Provincial Banner (seen above me today), celebrated 2 Lodge Centenaries, and Consecrated a new Royal Ark Mariner Lodge as well as numerous other Lodge and Provincial events.

We also enjoyed a very full and successful Social Program, and I thank Mick Ricketts and his team for organising our Social Events. Also John Whitworth and John Fitzpatrick for their Musical evenings. Our two major Festival events last year, the Second Northern Masonic Variety Show and the Barge Pull, raised between them over £20,000, and I thank the Festival Committee and all of you for that wonderful support.

And it was also my great pleasure to be involved in three major charitable presentations. That of a Blood Bike to Whiteknights Yorkshire last August, a Mobile Cancer Unit to Airedale Hospital in November, and an Ambulance Support Unit to St John Ambulance last month. All of which are Testimony to the good work being done by the Mark Benevolent Fund.

This year will be just as busy, brethren, with the Consecration of a new Provincial Grand Stewards Lodge and the Dedication of a Provincial Royal Ark Mariner Banner. Dates for these will be announced shortly. There will also be our usual Provincial Team Visits to Lodges and a meeting of the joint Sheffield Lodges will take place on 24th July - where I will be doing the Secrets, brethren, so come along and be entertained. Our Social Committee have organised another Christmas Ball at the Mercure Hotel, Bingley, which I understand will once again be tremendous value for money so as Yorkshiremen, I know that will be good news to you all. And the year will be rounded off with our usual Carol Service at Brighouse on the 8th December.

Our only Provincial Festival event this year will be the 'Perimeter Perambulation' where our Past Deputy Provincial Grand Master, Richard Puttrell, will be attempting to walk around all the Lodge buildings on the perimeter of the Province. Now that amounts to some 230 miles brethren, over 13 days. So if any of you wish to join him !! No brethren ? Well perhaps then you would like to sponsor him instead. Individual Sponsorships can be made online, using the link from the Provincial Website and these will be gift aided. Lodge donations can be made using the sponsorship forms available in your Lodges. So let's all support Richard - and help to make yet another, very significant contribution to our Festival.

But it's your Lodge fundraising which will ensure the success of our Festival in 2023 brethren. Because together that will raise a far greater amount than the Province could possibly raise. So please continue with your Lodge fundraising and try to organise at least one Lodge Festival event each year. When I launched the Festival in 2016 I asked all Lodges to attempt to reach Grand Patron Gold Award status by 2023 so that the Province could qualify. Several Lodges have already achieved this and more will receive their collarets later today. And it's a delight to see, that in many cases, Lodges who have already achieved it are now helping other Lodges by making donations in their name. Now isn't that what Freemasonry is all about brethren? And the good news I can now share with you all is that because of that, ALL Lodges in the Province have now achieved at least Grand Patron status. An excellent result in only 3 years brethren - and I do congratulate you all.

There is still a lot of work to do -but on the foundation you have built to become Grand Patrons, I would like, today, to re-launch us all towards achieving that Grand Patron Gold Award by 2023. I'm sure, brethren, that together we can do it.

Now last year, arrangements for the investiture of Grand Ranks changed, with First Appointments being conferred in June, and Promotions in September. That proved to be very successful and will continue again this year.

The names of brethren in the Province receiving appointments were announced just 2 weeks ago and I would ask them to stand as I name them:

With appointments to Active Rank:

W.Bro. Mark Kenyon	to	Assistant Grand D of C
and Chris Oldfield	to	Grand Steward

With First appointments to Past Rank:

Michael Holmes	to	P.A.G.D.C.
Sam Cariss	to	P.A.G.Swd.B.

George Foster and

David Cordell	to	P.G.St.B.
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and to celebrate the Centenary of Peace Lodge No 681 just 2 weeks ago:

Martyn Roche	to	P.A.G.Swd.B.
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And with Promotions to Past Rank to be conferred in September:

Michael Holgate and

Jim Stanley	to	P.G.S.D.
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and Tony Mackrell	to	P.G.J.D.
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Congratulations to them all Brethren and I think they deserve our applause.

Brethren, the Annual Meeting of the Charity Committee, took place at Otley on the 2nd March, and the Report submitted by the Chairman of the Cleeves and Whitehead

Trust, Jim Stanley, will appear in the 2019 Provincial Year Book. I thank Jim and the Trustees for the magnificent support the Trust continues to give to all Mark Masons in the Province and how it, in turn, supports the Mark Benevolent Fund and our Festival.

But we should always remember, brethren, that Freemasonry is not just about Charity. Charity is important, but we must not forget our roots. We still need to love and respect one another, to transmit friendship and harmony, to encourage discipline in our Order, and to help make better men, out of men - and better Freemasons out of Freemasons. And in order to do that, I once again urge all brethren in the Province to go out and visit the other Lodges. And that especially applies to Worshipful Masters and their Wardens, who during their year in Office are Ambassadors for their Lodge. Visiting is a fundamental part of our Order.

And also to at least try to learn the ritual, so that we can make the best possible impact on our Candidates. Candidates we need to respect and enjoy our Order, and who we so desperately need to keep.

You have heard the Registrar's Report, and over the last few years we have seen a slow but steady decline in our numbers, mainly due to 3 things: More deaths, due to an ageing membership, fewer Candidates, and those Resignations. Although there is little we can do about the deaths, there has been a great deal of work done nationally on Recruitment, Retention & Re-invigoration. I have asked the Deputy Provincial Grand Master to head up a team locally to review that work and to prepare a shortlist, from the ideas it's generated, to consider for use in this Province. That has already led to another 'R' being added that being 'Retrieval' - to look at ways to recover some of the brethren we have previously lost. And we are also re-launching the Presentation we offer to Craft Freemasons.

Looking further ahead, brethren, I can now inform you of a very special and important future event in the Province. Because in 2021 the Province will celebrate its Sesquicentenary. The Province was formed on 2nd August 1871, so on the 1st Saturday in August 2021, which will be the 7th August that year, there will be a special celebratory meeting of the Province, held here at Bradford Grammar School

More details on that later brethren, but I assure you that some very interesting arrangements are already being planned for that day. So get the date in your diary now brethren. It's going to be one party you will definitely not want to miss.

Brethren, we have seen several changes in our Provincial Team today. W.Bro. Andrew Wright has stepped down as Provincial Charity Steward after 3 years in office and Jim Stanley takes up the reigns from today. My congratulations to Jim and grateful thanks to Andrew for a job well done. W.Bro. Alex Steel, our Provincial Almoner for the last 6 years has stepped down today. And Alex, we can't thank you enough for the care and

support you have given to the brethren and widows of this Province during that time. Paul Leach takes over as Almoner from today.

But one brother, who steps down today, has been an inspiration to us all. V.W.Bro. Edward Patnick, who is replaced today by W.Bro. Rev. Roger Quick, was appointed as our Provincial Grand Chaplain by R.W.Bro. Jim Truswell in 2010 -and was told by Jim that the job only entailed a few prayers. Edward has attended almost every Provincial event since then, organised our Carol Service each year, and delivered no less than 19 Orations at major Provincial events. A very worthy achievement indeed and I ask the Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies to escort V.W.Bro. Patnick to me.

Edward, on behalf of all the brethren of the Province I can't thank you enough for the job you have done as our Prov.G.Chaplain and it's my great pleasure to present you with this Provincial Grand Master's Award. It's only the second one I have presented in 6 years and there are only 3 others currently held by brethren and Ladies of the Province. But I can't think of a more worthy recipient - congratulations on a job so well done.

And finally brethren, my especial thanks go to the Provincial Grand Secretary, Fraser McPherson and the Secretarial team, who have worked so hard in preparing for this meeting.

To the Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies, John Vause and the D.C. team for their tremendous work today.

And to all of you, brethren, for the support you give to your Lodges, to our Order and to this Province.

I do hope that you all enjoy the year ahead continue to be Ambassadors for this wonderful Order of ours, continue to work the Mark Degree with pride but most of all brethren, continue to enjoy yourselves.

God Bless you all - and Mark Well