

You have heard me on many occasions refer to the Mark as a family, well brethren I'm delighted to see members of the family represented here from every Mark and RAM Lodge in the province, I hope you all have a very enjoyable day. Today we are of course joined by our extended family, by that I mean our Distinguished visitors from other Provinces and the Heads of Orders.

I'm sure you will want to welcome them wholeheartedly but can I ask you to hold back on your enthusiasm until after I have introduced all of them to you.

As ever brethren I would like to assure you that I'm still extremely proud and delighted to be your Provincial Grand Master and thank you all for the support and encouragement that you give me and my fellow Rulers. As I start my fourth year as your Provincial Grand Master, yes brethren it was three years ago when I was installed as the Tenth Provincial Grand Master of this Province, doesn't time go quickly when you are enjoying yourself. That, brethren, is my message to you all, enjoyment. Masonry should be enjoyable and fun. Yes, of course we should learn our ritual to the best of our abilities and deliver ceremonies to the highest standards, without the aid of ritual books. I'm convinced that the happiest lodges in the province and certainly the happiest and most hardworking members are those that deliver the best ceremonies and ritual. Please do your best to perform ceremonies to the highest standard, I believe that is the best way of keeping brethren committed to the Mark and will help with recruitment in the long run. I do understand that ritual is not for everyone, not everyone can be a perfect ritualist but we can all try our best and give it a go without a book in hand. Try it brethren, you will surprise yourself how well you do with just an odd prompt here and there. Enjoyment is the key brethren, enjoy your meetings, enjoy each other's company at the dinner afterwards and enjoy the many social events around the Province. I make no apology for again using the words of the late V.W.Bro Peter Love, he used to say, we pay for masonry so we better make sure we enjoy it.

Today is traditionally when I report on the membership of the Order, I can tell you that we are roughly the same as last year with around 760 members and just short of 1100 memberships. In the current climate and taking into account the number of unfortunate deaths we have had this year I believe we are doing well and in Royal Ark Mariner terms we

are keeping our heads above water. We do however need to attract more members. Please use the membership forms on your chair and ask a brother to join us. Sing the virtues of the Mark, invite him to one of our social functions, the Mark Ladies Evening, again held at York Racecourse on the 5th May for example, or ask him to attend one of the very successful Mark meets the Craft presentation evenings, organised by V.W.Bro David Crofts. I do thank V.W.Bro David and his team for their efforts in promoting the Mark. Ask a non mason to one of our social events, you never know he may be a Mark Man for the future. Asking a Craft brother to join the Mark should not be done in a way that is detrimental to any other Order. The bedrock of Masonry is the Craft, Mark and Chapter, memberships of these gives you a springboard to join other orders. All the Orders are complimentary to each other and are intrinsically linked and when the time is right then that's the time to expand your masonic knowledge and for you to join another Order. I must point out that although I would encourage all Craft Masons to join the Royal Arch it is not a prerequisite that you have to be a Chapter Mason to join the Mark. Craft Brethren are free to join the Mark when the time is right for them.

We also must not forget a strong Craft is essential to all Orders, please be on the lookout for suitable candidates, the Craft is the lifeblood of all the Orders, for us to be strong the Craft needs to be strong.

The year has been a full one, I and my fellow Rulers and the Provincial team have travelled many miles to attend Installations and team visits. The 2017 Provincial team have done themselves proud, you have supported the Province to the best of your ability and I thank you for the support you have given me, my Deputy and Assistant. The old adage, the more you put in the more you get out, comes to mind and I believe that the team can be very proud of their commitment and I know that they have thoroughly enjoyed their year in office. Some of course will continue in office but some after many years serving this province will stand down from Active office.

During the year, V.W.Bro. Allan Scott decided to step down as Deputy Provincial Grand Master after three years in office. Allan has served this Province extremely well since becoming the Assistant Secretary in 2004 moving up to Provincial Secretary in 2007, staying in office until 2012. The following year being installed as the Assistant Provincial Grand Master. Allan the Province owes you a great debt and I do wish you well

in your retirement from office and thank you for your continued guidance and support.

Today also marks the retirement from office of one of the Assistants to the Provincial Almoner, after six years in post W.Bro. Malcolm Farrow has decided to step down. Malcolm, I do thank you for the way you have supported the Almoner, making his job a lot easier, I wish you well, but of course you are still in charge of running the Keystone Club. Brethren if you are not in the Keystone draw its only £10 per year, please see Malcolm after the meeting. Malcolm thank you.

Today we also witness the retirement from office of the Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies, W.Bro. Mike Collinson. Mike first became a Provincial Grand Senior Deacon in 2004 going on to become an Assisting DC, moving up to Assistant, then Deputy DC and finally becoming the Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies in 2013. An office you have held with distinction, you have given me invaluable help in my first three years as PGM. Mike I know you will continue to support and help the Province in any way you can. I do sincerely thank you on behalf of myself and the Province.

I and my fellow Rulers have had the pleasure of visiting many Provinces and I do thank the Provincial Grand Masters assembled here today for the hospitality and friendship we receive when attending their Provincial meetings. I hope that we have returned your kindness today. We have travelled overseas twice this year, to Jersey for the Channel Island meeting and to a special meeting in the Isle of Man. The consecration of a New Province, the Installation of the First Provincial Grand Master and the First Provincial AGM of the I.O.M. R.W.Bro. Martin Blackburn, I and the Province of North and East Yorkshire wish you well and look forward to seeing your Province flourish in the coming years.

The year has also seen fifty of our brethren and partners travel down to Berkshire for the MBF 2017 Festival dinner, a splendid weekend raising much needed funds for the MBF. This year's dinner, the 150th, will be held in the Province of Lincolnshire and I'm pleased to say that we will have around sixty from this province attending the dinner, R.W.Bro Trevor Walker, I wish you well for your festival and look forward to an enjoyable weekend in Lincoln.

The year also witnessed the inaugural MBF walk, walking round the Royal Parks of London. A magnificent day, raising nearly £450,000. I'm pleased say that we did our bit, donating the money we raised to the West Yorkshire Festival. I do thank you all for sponsoring this event and my thanks goes to the team that walked alongside me.

I'm pleased to tell you that the money raised has been allocated to buying Blood Bikes. This is a voluntary organisation that transports, out of hours, urgently needed Blood, Platelets and other medical supplies. We have one Blood Bike already in use in the North of the Province shared with the Province of Durham and one I believe allocated to be shared with West Yorkshire, soon to arrive. The MBF have also supplied this Province with two St Johns Ambulances, one already delivered, to be used in the South of the Province and one to be delivered in April which will be based in the North of the Province. One of the donated St. Johns Ambulances is outside this building for you to see this morning. Hopefully it won't be called into use today.

This is where your charitable donations go, along with the Provincial Charities that we support, your money is well spent and I urge you to give what you can afford and for you all to take out a covenant, so tax relief can be applied. Please talk to the Provincial or your Lodge Charity Steward. The Provincial Charity Steward is also available to attend Lodge meetings to give a short talk on Mark Masonic Charities, please ask him he will be only too obliged to attend.

The year also witnessed the re-birth of the revamped and renamed "New Summer Fayre", this was a resounding success. The event had a Classic Mini display, Birds of Prey demonstration, unfortunately I had to be photographed with a very large Owl Hawk that seemed to think my nose was its lunch, the Masonic Bikers "the Widows Sons" were in attendance, along with Cedric Thornton's Harley. A number of classic cars including a vintage Fire engine, brought along by Bro Dave Tabner. All this and much more. Many of the lodges joined in the fun providing many varied stalls and games. My thanks to W.Bro's Vic Thompson, Peter Nesbitt, David Jennings and Roy Padwick and all the team that worked so hard to make the day a success. Please make a note that this year's "Summer Fayre" will be held on Saturday 14th July with a 12 noon start. Hopefully all the Lodges will come on board this year and have a stall.

A good number of the Province travelled down to London last June to witness our brethren receive Promotions and First appointments at Grand Lodge. Please stand brethren when I read your name as I'm sure after I have read all your names the brethren would like to congratulate you. Promoted

To Active Grand Senior Deacon – W.Bro. Clive Copley
 To Active Grand Steward – W.Bro Stephen Priestley
 To Past Grand Senior Deacon – W.Bro Mike Collinson
 To Past Grand Junior Deacon - W.Bro Neil Webster

Receiving First Appointments

To P.A.G.D.C. - W.Bro Gordon Turner
 To P.A.G.Swd.B. W.Bro Brian Rigby
 To P.A.G.Std.B. W.Bro. Ken Eyre

Congratulations to all of you. You have all made a valuable contribution this year Stephen and Neil travelling to Jersey with me and all of you attending the September and March Grand Lodge meetings and many of the social events during the year but I must reserve my biggest admiration for W.Bro. Ken Eyre. Breaking off from his holiday in Bulgaria for three days to travel to London to receive his appointment then back to Bulgaria. A truly dedicated Mason.

The PWRL was brought into being to help the Province in any way the PGM deemed necessary. I'm pleased to say that the lodge is now finding its feet and growing in stature not only does it provide DC's for my Representatives, helps to organise DC workshops, and provides valuable assistance, under the watchful eye of W.Bro. Geoff Eastburn, for today's meeting. It has now acted on a suggestion by me that they should visit Lodges that are low in numbers and would benefit from their presence, either filling seats or occupying offices that the lodge are unable to fill. W.Bro. Ling Yu, the Worshipful Master, ably assisted by W.Bro's Peter Nesbitt and Geoff Eastburn with a good number of PWRL members have visited two lodges in the last few weeks and they have been warmly received and the Lodges have been delighted with their presence and the fact they are willing and able to fill offices. PWRL thank you for taking this initiative on, you are now starting to live up to the expected high standards you have set yourself. Take note, if you

require any assistance from the PWRL they are there to help, get in touch with their secretary, W.Bro Stephen Hawkes or the Provincial Grand Secretary.

To the new team that I have appointed today, I congratulate you all, I and my fellow Rulers look forward to an enjoyable year in your company. We have high expectations of you, the 2017 team have set high standards of commitment and dedication which I hope you will emulate. I also ask one more thing of you during your year in office bring me a candidate for advancement.

I have already thanked the Executive Officers of the Province who have provided reports today but there are many more who work tirelessly for this Province, without them this Province would not function as it does. You are too many to mention by name but I do sincerely thank you all.

To the Provincial Grand Directors of Ceremonies, I thank you for Ceremonial aspect of today, I look forward to working with the new team headed by W.Bro. Ron Campbell.

With the appointment of W.Bro. Clive Copley as Deputy Provincial Grand Master, last June, which was an acknowledgement of over ten years of dedicated service to this Province on the Secretariat, the last five as Provincial Grand Secretary, a new team was appointed. W.Bro Bill Glanville as Provincial Secretary, Bill you have done a splendid job, although you have not been on the secretariat that long your enthusiasm and attention to detail have helped you through an enormous learning curve. You have been ably assisted by your Deputy, W.Bro. Geoff Nicholson and your Assistant, W.Bro. Allan Williams. Thank you all for all the hard work you have put in. My thanks also goes to W.Bro. Alan Hatfield, who has not only produced the welcome packs but also the RAM brochures on your seats.

Enjoyment brethren, that is how I started this address and that is how I will finish. Enjoyment is essential. If you enjoy your meetings you are more than likely to attend the next meeting. Make sure your meetings have content, if you haven't an advancement planned make sure you have a talk or presentation. Enjoy your Mark Masonry with the extended family by attending one of the many Provincial Social events organised by the Provincial Social Committee, headed by Bro Frank Harlington and the social secretary W.Bro. Malvin Sharpless. For the Lodges who don't have social functions, take the stress away of organising an event

by using a Provincial function, in particular the Mark Ladies Evening, use it as your own Lodge Ladies Night. Let the Province do all the hard work you just turn up and enjoy yourselves. Once again, the lodge attending the Ladies Evening with the most numbers will receive a bottle of whiskey, a bouquet of flowers for the WM's lady and a special prize that is worth winning. See you all on the 5th May. My thanks go to the Social Committee for their hard work in organising this special event and all the events during the year..

Brethren thank you for your attention and your attendance today, those that can't stay for lunch I wish you a safe journey home and hope to see you in the not too distant future. Those that are staying for lunch, I have to report that yet again I can smell burnt Yorkshire puddings.

Thank you all brethren and remember, ENJOYMENT!