

**PROVINCIAL GRAND ASSEMBLY OF ROYAL ARK MARINERS.
NORTH AND EAST YORKSHIRE.**

Minutes of the Sixteenth Annual Assembly held as a Virtual Business Meeting by “ZOOM”
at 11.00 am. on Saturday November 11th 2020.

The Provincial Grand Master started by stating that we were “making history” by holding this Provincial Assembly in the form of a Virtual Zoom Meeting.

He gave a particular welcome to the Grand Secretary – R.W.Bro Ryan Williams and
Heads of other Orders:-

Craft/Chapter

Jeffrey Gillyon	Provincial Grand Master & Most Excellent Grand Superintendent
William Glanville	Provincial Grand Secretary & Grand Scribe Ezra
Jon Smith	Provincial Deputy Grand Superintendent
Tony Burke	Past 3 rd Prov. Grand Principal (PGM of Province of Lindsay Masonic Order of Athelstan)

Red Cross of Constantine

David Roach	Intendent General of Division of N&E Yorks
Geoff Nicholson	Divisional Recorder of Division of N&E Yorks
Neil Webster	Past Deputy Intendant General N&E Yorks

Royal & Select Masters

Neil Woodward	District Grand Master N&E Yorks
Stephen Priestley	Deputy District Grand Master N&E Yorks
Tom Spinks	District Grand Recorder & Past District Grand Principal of the Work
David Roach	Past District Principal Conductor of Works

Allied Masonic Degrees

Tom Spinks	District Grand Secretary for Yorkshire
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Secret Monitor

Stephen Cox	Deputy Provincial Grand Supreme Ruler N&E Yorks
Malvin Sharpless	Provincial Recorder N&E Yorks
Graham Fenwick	Past Provincial Grand Supreme Ruler N&E Yorks
Dennis Slights	Past Provincial Grand Supreme Ruler N&E Yorks

Scarlet Chord

Chris Barker	Provincial Grand Summus
Stephen Priestley	Deputy Provincial Grand Summus
Graham Fenwick	Assistant Provincial Grand Summus
Dennis Slights	Past Provincial Grand Summus
Gordon Setterfield	Primus Deputy Provincial Grand Summus

Operatives

Stephen Priestley	Deputy Grand Master Mason & Senior Past Master
Graham Fenwick	Past M.W. 3rd Grand Master Mason
Gordon Setterfield	Past Deputy Grand Master Mason VII

Pilgrim Preceptors

Stephen Priestley	Regional Governor of Northern England & Wales
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W.Bro. Frederick Arthur Smith,
W.Bro. Allan Scott
W.Bro. Neil Woodward

Past Deputy Provincial Grand Master
Past Deputy Provincial Grand Master
Past Deputy Provincial Grand Master

He then declared the Meeting Open.

The Provincial Grand Secretary read out the “Letter of Permission” to hold the Meeting.

Obituaries

The Assistant Provincial Grand Master was called upon to read out the Obituaries of 11 departed brethren.

George Kenneth Hawkes	Middlesbrough 276
David Melville	Scarborough 95
Richard Hudson	Ryedale 277
Bernard Arthur Casson	York TI
George Henry Philip Birch	The Ridings IC 1452
Derek Wright	Scarborough 95
Michael Charles Jeffery	Beacon Centenary 1583
Ian Malcolm Grant	Hull 182
Robin Henry Sharpe	Hull 182
George Wilfrid Walker	Alexandra 803
Ernest Alexander McGeagh	Trinity Lodge IC 1428

The Provincial Chaplain gave prayer.

Minutes

The minutes of the last Provincial RAM Assembly held on 2nd November 2019 having been posted on the Provincial Website – there were no amendments.

Proposed for acceptance by the Deputy Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies – WBro Les Richings and seconded by the Assistant Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies – WBro Steve Cox
The Provincial Grand Master called for a show of hands and declared the minutes approved.

Report

The report of the Provincial Grand Secretary having posted on the Provincial Website – there were no amendments

Proposed for acceptance by the Deputy Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies – WBro Les Richings and seconded by the Assistant Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies – WBro Steve Cox
The Provincial Grand Master called for a show of hands and declared the report approved.

Address by the Grand Secretary R.W.Bro Ryan Williams

(reproduced hereunder in full – with the permission of the Grand Secretary)

Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master, may I begin by thanking you for the invitation to join you and the Brethren of the Province today. But for Covid-19, I would have been with you in person to witness the conferral of Provincial Royal Ark Mariner Grand Rank and deliver this Address.

Sadly, circumstances have prevented that from happening, but I am delighted to be joining in this Virtual Business Meeting this morning and to have the opportunity to speak to you all.

As you can imagine, Brethren, I have attended many Virtual Business Meetings over the last few months most of them to provide an update on how Mark Masons’ Hall is responding to the challenges of Covid-19. And I will share a brief update on things later.

Today’s meeting is all about the Ancient and Honourable Fraternity of Royal Ark Mariner, so I’ve chosen as the subject of this Address something which sits at the heart of the administration of the Order, but it perhaps less well known about among the membership. And coincidentally, Brethren, is something that celebrates its 150th anniversary this year.

At the festive board following any Royal Ark Mariner meeting, you drink the health of the Members of the Grand Master’s Royal Ark Council. But have you ever wondered who they are and what exactly their function is?

The first mention of this body was 150 years ago in 1870 when the Grand Master at that time on George Raymond Portal announced that since the Degree of Royal Ark Mariner had been worked in Mark Lodges since 1790, the Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons would protect it under a new Grand Master's Royal Ark Council.

This happened and is the reason why, even today, that Grand Mark Lodge has control of the rainbow.

Yet, even though the Mark staked its claim for the Degree in 1870, it didn't take ownership of it until some 17 years later when in 1884 it purchased it from Morton Edwards, then Grand Commander, for the princely sum of £25.

So, a situation has existed for a century and a half where we have two quite separate and distinct Orders, each with their own Constitutions & Regulations, yet inextricably linked.

How does that work and why is it so?

The Degree of The Ancient and Honourable Fraternity of Royal Ark Mariner is, of course, governed by the Grand Master with the advice of the Grand Master's Royal Ark Council.

The bridge between the Mark and Royal Ark Mariner now becomes evident when you note that the Council consists of those members of the Mark General Board who are holders of Royal Ark Mariner Grand Rank. Thirteen in number comprising the Pro, Deputy and Assistant Grand Masters; the President; Grand Treasurer; Grand Registrar; Grand Secretary; Grand Director of Ceremonies; Deputy President; two serving Provincial Grand Masters elected annually; and two serving Provincial Grand Masters nominated by the Grand Master.

Now whilst the membership of these two governing bodies is the same, their meetings are separate but are held back to back on the same day each quarter. The function of the Council, like the Board, is to regulate the business of the Order. The day to day administration is carried out by the Grand Secretary assisted by the staff at Mark Mason's' Hall while the Council (and the Board respectively) act as the check and balance in the system.

So, Petitions for new Lodges, applications for Celebration Warrants, approval of Banners are all dealt with by me and my staff in the name of the Board/Council to whom a report of this activity is made each quarter for noting and retrospective approval. But the work of the Council isn't just limited to this because it also functions as a Ritual Committee considering any amendments to the published rituals of the Order; a Disciplinary Committee dealing with matters of masonic discipline; and a Constitutional Committee looking at revisions to the Constitutions & Regulations. Members of the Council are denoted by the letters G.M.R.A.C. after their name and by the wearing of the Grand Master's Royal Ark Council collarette and jewel which consists of the usual rainbow collarette to which is attached a globe with gold wings. This remains the property of Grand Lodge so that on the death of a member, it must be returned.

Besides full membership of the Council, another tier exists to recognise senior members of the other MMH Orders and those who have given meritorious service to the Degree of Royal Ark Mariner. That is a form of honorary membership, holders wear the same collarette and winged globe and bear the letters G.M.R.A.C (H.C.) after their name – standing for Grand Master's Royal Ark Council (Honoris Causa).

Brethren honoured by full membership of the Council or Honorary Membership are automatically styled 'Right Worshipful Brother' something that does not happen to members of the General Board in the Mark Degree. The significance of membership of the Council on either level is further underlined by the fact that in the Order of Precedence, a Brother holding this distinction ranks above a Provincial/District Grand Master.

Membership is an honour enjoyed by very few and is highly coveted. In fact, Brethren, there are many Provincial and District Grand Masters who would give their right arm in exchange for the honour and the very distinctive regalia that goes with it. The Council holds a very special place in the administration of this beautiful Order where simplicity is perhaps its most attractive feature. Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master and Brethren, as a member of the Grand Master's Royal Ark Council, I can attest, first hand, to the fact that it (and the General Board) work consistently hard on your behalf to administer both Orders. They are both an integral part of the governance structure that exists at MMH and serve the same functions as the Executive Committees of the other 8 Orders we administer.

Brethren, I hope that when better times return and you are able to attend Royal Ark Mariner meetings, you will raise a glass to the members of the Grand Master's Royal Ark Council in the full knowledge that this somewhat mysterious body, sitting at the heart of the Order, is working on your behalf for the benefit of Royal Ark Mariner Masonry.

Brethren, I said at the beginning that I would also give you an update on how Mark Masons' Hall is responding to the challenges of Covid-19

- The last eight months have been a turbulent time, but our Orders have demonstrated a resilience to the situation and a willingness to engage with one another and the communities around us.
 - At the outset, UGLE, Ancient & Accepted Rite and MMH agreed a common approach to the situation and you will recall the joint announcement of the General Suspension that we made.
 - Since that time, and for a variety of reasons including demographic or age profile as well as important constitutional differences, it has been necessary for us to take different paths but, we remain committed to working together on a common way forward where that is possible. But just in the last week we have joined again by making a co-ordinated announcement of our response to the new lockdown in England.
 - We must all remember that there is no handbook to tell us what to do in the current situation and even our records from the Second World War period provide little insight into what we should do.
 - So we have had to develop policy, procedures and processes ‘on the hoof’ and whilst we haven’t always got it right first time, we have received constructive feedback from our Provinces and Districts which has enabled us to tweak what we have in place.
 - From the beginning, my priority has been to create an environment in which face to face meetings could take place safely and as that became more of a challenge as Covid-19 spread, to provide Lodges with a toolkit – a series of options – to enable them to continue transacting business and, most importantly, to keep in touch.
 - Covid-19 has brought many negative impacts to those around us, but it has also brought some benefits. It’s brought the importance of communication into sharp focus. So previously we probably all took the need to keep in touch for granted simply because meetings were taking place to facilitate that contact. As we all became more distant from one another due to lockdown, the need to stay in touch became ever more necessary and I am continually impressed by the way our members have risen to the challenge and embraced new technology to do just that.
 - Since mid-March, I have issued over 50 separate communications relating to Covid-19 and whilst I apologise for bombarding you with so much news, I felt it important that Grand Lodge keeps you in touch with what is going on and responds as quickly as possible to changing circumstances.
 - One of the initiatives I launched early in the pandemic was the virtual business meetings scheme, initially for Lodges and then shortly afterwards extended to Provinces and Districts. This scheme has proved to be hugely popular and effective and the fact that we are gathered here this morning on a zoom call is a testament to that. In many areas, our Orders are operating almost entirely on a virtual platform but if it keeps things ticking over; if it helps to maintain the interest and engagement of the Brethren, then it must be good.
 - Doing nothing was never an option for me because if we simply shut up shop until next year, the risk of losing members in much larger numbers increases exponentially. That’s why we have been working hard to deliver this toolkit of measures to keep the business of our Orders going and I have to say that, so far, it seem to have been successful.
 - If you’d asked me back in March what I expected the impacted on our membership to be, I would have comfortably said that losses would be in double digits before the year end. I am pleased to say that the losses have been nowhere near as bad as that yet:
 - Mark Headcount down 2.7% year on year
 - Mark Memberships down 2.4% year on year
 - Royal Ark Mariner Headcount down 2.1% year on year
 - Royal Ark Mariner memberships down 2.5% year on year
- Consider these figures against the overall performance for the ten Orders we administer from Mark Masons’ Hall where the net reduction in headcount is 2.6% and memberships 2.7%.
- Statistics can often tell whatever story you wish them to but there is one stand out story in the latest data that its important I share with you. And that is that in the last year, Mark Masonry lost 1,840 Brethren due to resignation whilst the Royal Ark Mariner lost 463 Brethren.
 - These losses are ones where we have an opportunity to possibly change the outcome, but it requires us to act quickly, find out the true reason behind a resignation and offer a solution where we can. That is why, in July, we rolled out a new retention process which is aimed at trying to recover as many potential resignations as possible. It’s a little too soon to say whether it is working universally but early indications suggest that we are making progress. So my message to each of you is if you know of a Brother considering resigning his membership, act quickly, talk to him and see what, if anything can be done to change his mind because often the resignation is due to meeting dates and times not working out or friends no longer being members of the same Lodge.
 - As part of our broader attempt to retain existing members and recruit new ones when we return to better times, I announced in July a package of financial measures which see the Annual Dues frozen at last year’s

rates; a 50% reduction in Registration Fees for new members to our Orders; and a 50% reduction in Joining Fees for Brethren wishing to extend their membership tally. I hope you feel that this package, which fits within the finances available to us, is helpful.

- Developing closer ties with other Masonic Orders and the communities in which we live has been a key feature of the last seven months. So, there are countless examples, of the MMH Orders working more closely than ever with the Craft and Royal Arch in charitable activities and communication.
- I have seen so many examples of our member getting involved in foodbanks, meals services and many other projects and all that without an compulsion – they’ve done it because they wanted to and let us hope that the communities in which we live will develop a better and fairer understanding of freemasons as a result.
- Charity continues to be a focus for us, and the Mark Benevolent Fund has been providing funding for Covid related projects and other initiatives during the last seven months as well as helping individuals in need.
- In the last year, the Fund has dispersed a total of £1.3m in worthy causes grants - £300,000 of that in the last three months alone. Applications and petitions continue to be received and we are working to turn these around as quickly as we can.
- We must not forget that the office of Provincial Grand Charity Steward and Provincial Grand Almoner are extremely important in these difficult times and I urge you to do what you can to support their endeavours.
- As you can see, Brethren, there’s been a lot going on at Grand Lodge. We’ve delivered many of the items that have been on our ‘to do’ list for some time and there is more to come.
- Looking to the future, we will be a leaner but fitter organisation when we come out of the pandemic and I think we will be an organisation that will have reflected on its values and learn from its experiences of the past months. The Grand Master said in his message to you all back in June that we should not the let the past dictate what we are, but we should let it shape what we become.
- Those who join to join Mark and Royal Ark Mariner Masonry and the other Progressive Orders do so because they want to and I very much hope that will sustain us through to better times.
- Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master, thank you once again for the invitation to join you and the Brethren of the Province of North & East Yorkshire today. I hope that the story of the Grand Master’s Royal Ark Council and the update on our response to Covid-19 have been informative and interesting.

Appointments to Royal Ark Mariner Provincial Grand Rank

The Deputy Provincial Grand Master was called upon to read the list of the recipients of Royal Ark Mariner Provincial Grand Rank –

Jonathon Smith	Minerva	12TI
Gordon Turner	Middlesbrough	276
Ronald Hare	Ryedale	277
Ken Eyre	Howdenshire	743
Steve Bisby	Alexandrea	803
Alan Hatfield	Alexandra	803
Alan Hopwood	Allertonshire	845
Trevor Chalmers	Beacon Centenary	1583

Address by the Provincial Grand Master

(reproduced hereunder in full)

Brethren, we are certainly living in very worrying and uncertain times. The pandemic doesn’t seem to be coming under control and more and more restrictions are being placed on our daily lives, indeed as we know a Masonic Suspension started last Thursday and the whole country finds itself in lockdown again. There is however a shining Rainbow across our Province and over the whole of the Masonic world. By that I mean the efforts of all our members to help our fellow brethren and the wider community. I have a great feeling of extreme pride being a Freemason. The charitable and voluntary work that all our orders, the lodges and individual members have done to try to help offset the worse effect of the pandemic have been truly heroic and selfless. The meals provided for the elderly and vulnerable, the PPE, such as facemasks, that have been donated to care homes and dentists, distributed around the province free of charge and the

continued support of the MBF, by such things as donating the profit made on the sale of the T@3 mugs. This Province, along with the Province of West Yorkshire will soon be handing over a mini bus to Martin House Hospice and the Yorkshire Air Ambulance will be receiving a rapid response vehicle bought by a substantial donation from the MBF. Our own Provincial Charities have not stopped providing funds for registered charities within our Province. We, along with the Mark Provinces of West Yorkshire and Lincolnshire and the Craft Province of West Yorkshire have donated a total of £12,000 to the Friends of Connaught Court to provide much needed home comforts for the residents of our regional Masonic Care Home based in York. We should, all of us, be extremely proud to call ourselves Freemasons and not be afraid to tell non-Masons about the contributions we have made during the last few months and will continue to make in the coming months and years ahead. We should also be mindful that because we are not meeting as we once did and social events are non-existent, it does have a knock-on effect of the charitable monies raised and thereby the money available for charitable donations. These are difficult times for us all but please look to see if you can give a charitable donation to your lodge or province or run some sort of money raising scheme at your lodge virtual meetings. Please get in touch with W.Bro Stephen Hawkes the Provincial Charity Steward for help with these initiatives also available through W. Bro. Stephen at £10 each are the Lapel Badges in support of the East Lancashire MBF Festival. I would also like to thank the Provincial Almoner, W.Bro David Jennings, for the work he is doing to keep in touch with many of our brethren and where help is required providing it. A substantial amount of money has been diverted to the Almoners fund to help those brethren who are in need, whether that be help with their subscriptions, financial worries or stress related issues. W. Bro David can also call on the MBF if he feels that is appropriate.

My congratulations to all those receiving promotion to RAMProvGR, it is in recognition of what you have done for the Order and in anticipation of what you will do in the future. I hope normality will resume soon so we can all share each other's company once more. My congratulations also goes to W.Bro Ron Campbell, the Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies and W.Bro Peter Saxton, who will both receive the rank of RAMGR this coming December. Again, recognition of what you have done for the Order but also in anticipation of the greater efforts you will put in to further the Order in the coming years.

Communication is vital in the coming weeks and months ahead. We must keep talking to each other, we must keep the Mark and RAM family together and as vibrant as possible. I would urge all lodges to use the zoom platform provided by the Province to hold Lodge VBM for administration purposes. I would also suggest and encourage lodges to meet on their usual lodge nights for a social gathering using zoom or whatever social platform you wish. This will enable the lodge members to see each other and enjoy each other's company, I know in a somewhat different manner but nevertheless it does get everyone together and talking.

If social media is not for you, please phone, email or send letters on a regular basis. We must continue to communicate and don't forget to include those who are waiting to join the Mark and the RAM. They are very important to both Orders.

A special thank you to the Assistant Provincial Grand Master, W. Bro Paul Barham, for setting up the Facebook site, it has been a very welcome addition to our communications and brought a lot of enjoyment to the members and a number of prospective candidates. Well done Paul.

My thanks to the Provincial Secretary for his untiring and committed work he is continuing to do during these times, thanks also go to his Deputy and Assistant.

The pandemic can in some respect be likened to the perils suffered by our Great Predecessor, the Patriarch Noah. We too are now drifting in perilous and dangerous waters. Hoping and praying that dry land will be found and our lives will return to normal. As Noah did, keep your faith, dry land will be found and things will return back to normal eventually.

You brethren, as I've called you in the past, are my elite team, members of both the Mark and the RAM. I call upon you to do your best to keep both our Orders vibrant and relative in these difficult times.

Keep communicating, Keep the Mark and RAM family and the whole Masonic Family together and let's make sure once we are back to normality that we all work together for the good of all Freemasonry.

Be proud to be a Royal Ark Mariner, be proud to be a Mark Man and be Proud to be Freemason.

Take Care and be Safe

Award of the Travelling Porphyry Stone

The Provincial Grand Master awarded the Travelling Porphyry Stone to the Beacon Centenary Lodge of Mark Master Masons No. 1583, being the Lodge with the greatest number of booked attendees.

Other Competent Business

The Provincial Grand Master gave a virtual presentation of the Distinguished Service Award (DSA) to –

W.Bro. Brian Gent	Hull	182
W.Bro. Dennis Slights	St Peter's	1008

The Provincial Grand Secretary stated that there was no further business.

Closing

The Provincial Grand Master gave special thanks to the Grand Secretary for attending and delivering his address – and declared the meeting closed at 11:50hrs.