

Brethren, may I start by saying how delighted I am to see so many of you here at this, my third annual meeting of Provincial Grand Lodge as your Provincial Grand Master.

I have already welcomed our guests and visitors today. Once again, "thank you for your support". Your presence always adds such a lot to these meetings and highlights the fraternal friendship of this wonderful order. We have received exceptional hospitality during our visits to your Provincial meetings, and we do hope we can repay that today.

Brethren, the main purpose of our meeting today is to honour those who have been appointed and promoted. It is only right, therefore, that I now congratulate all those whom I have just invested with a Provincial Mark Grand Rank, especially those receiving first appointments, and those who have received Provincial R.A.M.G.R.

To the Brethren I have invested today, this day is special for you, and I hope you enjoy it. Your appointment to Provincial Rank brings greater responsibility. Please go back to your own Lodges and offer support and encouragement to your newer members. Please make every effort to accompany a newer member to an Advancement ceremony as soon as possible after they have joined.

Please enjoy your year ahead and embrace the opportunity by attending Installation meetings, supporting those Lodges that need it, and our three team visits.

Brethren, the Active Provincial Officers who accompanied W.Bro. Steve and me on all our official visits this year have been generously welcomed by all the Lodges we have visited. The support that Steve and I received was fantastic. Although it has been said many times throughout the year, I would like to place on record our sincere thanks for their magnificent support. I have enjoyed your company during the year, and I believe that sense of enjoyment, happiness and friendship has been transmitted throughout the Province.

I now want to offer my congratulations to W.Bro. Max Pheffe who was appointed to **PAGDC** two weeks ago by the Grand Master; it is a pleasure to see you in the regalia of a Grand Officer, an honour that is richly deserved. I must also congratulate W.Bro. David Clarke who will be promoted to **PGJD** at the September meeting of Grand Lodge. And finally, I congratulate W.Bro. Kim Alley who was appointed to **RAMGR** last December.

I am pleased to report that since our last Provincial meeting we have seen 14 new Advancees, the largest number since before 2015 when I started keeping records as Deputy Provincial Grand Secretary. Together with 4 new Joining Members from other Provinces we have welcomed 18 new faces.

One of those new faces is, of course, the PrGM for the Craft and the Grand Superintendent for the Royal Arch, Bro. John Reid. I am delighted that Bro. John has chosen to continue his Masonic journey in the Mark. I was honoured to be asked by the PrGM to become the APrGM of Wiltshire from October this year and I have assured Bro. John of my full support. The relationship between the Orders in Wiltshire is now, I believe, as strong as it has been for many years.

Brethren, we still need to maintain our recruitment activities. You are all ambassadors for the Mark and you have in your own hands the means to encourage our Craft brethren and Royal Arch Companions to consider taking the 4th regular step into the Mark Degree, using the Magic Of The Mark leaflets and by sharing your own experiences of being a Mark Mason. Please continue to do so. Of course, continue to support your Craft Lodges and Royal Arch Chapters, and the Membership Challenge. Remember, we are stronger together.

Last year we introduced the Provincial Lodge Support Team who have brethren willing to deliver interesting talks at Lodge meetings and stand in for Lodge officers at Advancement ceremonies. I urge you to use the team to ensure your meetings are welcoming and vibrant, with all your members engaged, with good ceremonies and great enjoyment.

Brethren, a most noteworthy event takes place this year. The MW Grand Master has been pleased to grant a Sesquicentenary Warrant to Wiltshire Keystone Lodge on completion of 150 years of continuous workings, the first Lodge in Wiltshire to be so honoured. A celebration meeting is currently planned for Friday 13 September.

I now want to turn to charity. Of course, we are all aware that the Wiltshire Craft Festival is in full swing and ends in 2028 and I need to tread carefully on asking too much of you. Thank you for your continuing support for the Mark Benevolent Fund, both individually and through your Lodges, and to all the local charities you have supported.

This year, as is our custom, we donated £2000 to Cheshire, who are hosting the MBF Festival dinner at the end of July and £1000 to Oxfordshire who are hosting next year.

Brethren, our own Festival is 2032 and I have tasked our Provincial Grand Charity Steward, to continue visiting Lodges to speak about the Mark Benevolent Fund and how you, and your Lodge, can obtain the Honorifics that you will see worn by many members who, by their personal contributions to the MBF, receive MBF jewels and collarettes reflecting the level of contribution.

Sadly, since our last meeting we have lost 10 of our members to the Grand Lodge Above. I particularly want to remember W.Bro. Peter Morgan our Provincial Grand Treasurer and W.Bro. Nigel Dalby who was in his 6th year as Provincial Grand Almoner. I want to place on record recognition of their service before their untimely passing, and in the case of Nigel his selfless support for the brethren of this Province; they will all be missed, and our thoughts are with those closest to them.

Brethren, this year W.Bro. Simon Finn has retired as our Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies after 10 years, during which he served under 3 Provincial Grand Masters. On behalf of RW Bro. Martin Brown, RW Bro. Andy Beaumont and myself and, of course the members of the Province, I want to place on record our thanks for his exemplary service.

I will end my address by extending my grateful thanks to the Provincial Grand Secretary, and his Deputy, for planning and delivering the day and to the Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies, and his predecessor, for organising the ceremonial for the meeting. Thank you to the brethren of Lansdowne Mark Lodge for providing the transport and heavy lifting.

Brethren, it is an honour and a privilege to be your Provincial Grand Master. I encourage you all to continue to enjoy your Mark masonry and, please, continue to promote the Magic of the Mark.

I wish you all an enjoyable summer and may the Great Overseer of the Universe bless and guide us until we meet again.