

Brethren, it gives me enormous pleasure to welcome so many of you to this, my fifth Annual Meeting as your Provincial Grand Master.

These annual meetings are important moments in the life of our Province — an opportunity not only to conduct our business, but also to celebrate friendship, service, and the continuing success of Mark Masonry in Wiltshire.

It remains both an honour and a privilege to serve in this office, and I thank you all sincerely for your continuing support.

Over the last twelve months you have heard a great deal from me, including through the Newsletter and in my response to the toast at the Festive Board. This morning, I would simply like to reflect on a few highlights from the year just passed and look ahead to the season before us.

This time last year I was pleased to announce a record influx of new members. I am now delighted to report that due to **your** excellent endeavours we have once again broken that record.

We will end this year with 21 Advancees and a net gain of 15 members — growth of over 5%.

Special recognition must go to Radnor Mark Lodge, which Advanced six candidates during the year. That may well be a Provincial record, although I confess I have been unable to check every Lodge record from the last 150 years.

Growth, however, is only meaningful if we continue to preserve the values and charitable spirit that define the Mark Degree.

Your continuing support for the Mark Benevolent Fund and the 2032 Festival has been exceptional. Thank you to all Lodges that have responded to my challenge to move to the next level of Honorific, or to achieve Grand Master's Keystone Fund status.

In addition, our Lodges have collectively donated more than £10,000 to deserving charities during the year, and that generosity reflects great credit upon you all.

I am also encouraged to see more brethren proudly wearing the 2032 Festival Steward's jewel.

Today we have witnessed a day of change within the leadership of the Province.

I repeat my thanks to W Bro Steve Bridge for his four years' service as Deputy Provincial Grand Master.

Congratulations to our new Deputy Provincial Grand Master, Ray Pipe. I look forward greatly to working alongside you for the continued betterment and success of this Province.

However, one other well-known Brother retires from office today — Malcolm Mace.

The records are somewhat unclear as to precisely when Malcolm first became Provincial Grand Organist. It may have been briefly in 1992, but certainly since at least 2012 — and perhaps even earlier — he has served this Province with distinction and unfailing commitment.

In recognition of that exceptional service, I am delighted to present Malcolm with a Provincial Certificate of Merit.

Brethren, a Certificate of Merit is awarded only in recognition of truly exceptional service to the Province and is something that should be greatly cherished.

Brethren, the principal purpose of this meeting is to recognise and honour those brethren who have today received appointment or promotion within the Province.

Your preferment is recognition of the contribution you have made to your Lodges and to Mark Masonry in Wiltshire, and I offer my sincere congratulations to you all. This is a special and memorable occasion for you, and I trust you will enjoy it fully.

However, your work does not end here. Appointment to Provincial Grand Rank brings with it greater responsibility. I ask you to return to your Lodges not simply wearing new rank, but actively supporting, encouraging, and guiding our newer brethren.

On behalf of myself and our Past Deputy Provincial Grand Master, I also thank the outgoing Provincial Officers who have, once again, provided magnificent support to the Province throughout the last year.

Looking ahead to the next twelve months, I have only three requests.

First, please continue to share the Magic of the Mark with those who have yet to experience it, and encourage them to continue their Masonic journey within this wonderful degree.

Secondly, please continue to support the charitable work of Mark Masonry through the Mark Benevolent Fund and the 2032 Festival in whatever way you are able.

And thirdly — enjoy your Mark Masonry. Never lose sight of the enjoyment, friendship, and fun that make this degree so special.

Earlier today I extended a warm welcome to our distinguished guests and visitors from twenty-four Provinces. Your presence reflects the friendship and unity that lie at the heart of our Order, and we are delighted you are with us today.

I trust you enjoy the hospitality and company of the Wiltshire brethren as much as we have enjoyed visiting many of your own Provincial meetings.

I also wish to thank the Assistant Grand Master for attending today.

Finally, I extend my grateful thanks to the Deputy Provincial Grand Master and the new Provincial Grand Secretary for planning and organising today's meeting.

My thanks also go to the Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies for overseeing and orchestrating the ceremonial so expertly, to the brethren who provided the transport and heavy lifting, and to the stewarding Lodges for all their support and assistance throughout the day.

Brethren, thank you all for your continuing enthusiasm, friendship, and commitment to Mark Masonry in Wiltshire.

I wish you all a restful and enjoyable summer break, and I look forward to meeting many of you again during the coming season.

Continue to enjoy your Mark Masonry and may the Great Overseer of the Universe bless and guide us until we meet again.