

The Provincial Grand Masters Address at the Provincial Meeting on the 24th May

Distinguished Guests and Brethren

First of all welcome once again to King Georges Hall and I hope that all the arrangements so far have been to your satisfaction.

I have already Introduced and Welcomed our Distinguished guests from other Provinces and members of this Province who are senior in the Craft and other Orders but I just want to say once again how much I value their presence and support.

It is a comfort to know that I could pick up the phone at any time and ask any of them for advice

It has been another busy year for the Province. We have had our usual social events and some new ones and celebrations of 50ths for Brethren and Lodges.

We attended Salford Mark Lodge to celebrate the 50th of WBro William Wallace a wonderful occasion supplemented by the Advancement of a Candidate a busy evening.

We attended Middleton Mark Lodge to celebrate the 50th of WBro Robert Rowden ... a special evening for both of us as I Presided at Bob's 50th in the Craft a few years ago and it was nice to Preside again in the Mark Degree.

And we attended Darwen Mark Lodge to celebrate their Lodge 50th last November.

Last November we also attended WIKE Mark Lodge to support them in their efforts to recruit new members. We presented an overview of the Mark and RAM degrees to several Craft Brethren which has resulted in several new members for the Lodge. We are hoping that Wike will celebrate their 150th in 2022 and the Chain Bearers will continue to attend and support the Lodge.

In February, we repeated that theme at Wycoller Mark Lodge.

We will be planning similar events in the next 12 months albeit at some different Lodges so if your Lodge is interested in hosting such an evening please contact the Provincial Secretary .

Brethren, we must not let our focus on the 2021 Festival distract us from the need to recruit and retain Mark Brethren. Over the last 9 months I have encouraged Lodges to increase their Membership by at least ONE, that does not sound too difficult but I know that it is not easy.

We have also made full Team Visits to the Lodges of both of our Wardens and our Provincial Grand Charity Steward and all 3 visits have been wonderful happy evenings and raised considerable monies for the 2021 Festival and the East Lancashire Mark Benevolent Fund.

Over 30 Acting Officers of the year attended each of these events

I am extremely grateful to all the acting officers of the Province who have supported myself and the Deputy and the Assistants in our visits to Lodges around the Province. We have again encouraged the Acting Officers of the year to attend visits by the Chain Bearers which has enhanced the meeting for all

Our Social Events

Brethren we have many Social Events some would say too many

The Hog Roast had to be cancelled last year due to flooding at Middleton Masonic Hall but is scheduled for Sunday 25th June again at Middleton

On the 10th March, we held our annual Master and Commanders Assembly at Rochdale and we had our highest attendance for several years with over 110 present.

Our Grand and Provincial Officers Reception was held at Ash Day Lea on Sunday 9th April ... a new venue for us but the weather allowed us to enjoy our pre-Lunch drinks outside in the sun shine and it was a lovely meal.

It is always our intention to move these events around the Province to suitable venues so that we share the travel times and just as important we are supporting a Masonic Hall in which Mark Masons meet

Our Cabaret Evening will again be held in November at the Holiday Inn, Bolton and thanks, are due to WBro Malcolm McCarthy and the Fellowship Committee for the arrangements

Brethren we do not expect all the Brethren to attend all the events. Choose the events that most suit you and we will be delighted to see you there

2021

You are all aware that we will host the MBF Festival in 2021 the appeal continues to gather pace and the festival committee under the chairmanship of W Bro Tony Davies are overseeing many of the fundraising events which are now taking place throughout the year.

I would still request each lodge to continue to organise at least one event a year for the benefit of the festival.

I would encourage all the members of the Province if their circumstances allow to support some of these functions as well as our more established events which are all ongoing again this year. They are on the Web Site or ask your Fellowship / Festival Representative

Myself, the Deputy and Assistants have supported Lodge Christmas Dinners, Sunday Lunches, Race Nights, Sportsman evenings and Golf Days to name but a few and have enjoyed doing so.

And of course, we again have the Annual Festival Banquet on 17th September this year at Middleton

This is now Sold Out but rest assured we are already looking for a venue for 2018 that can accommodate all those who wish to attend

I would also like to thank WBro Paul Waring for arranging a Gentlemen's Evening at Audenshaw earlier this year

And In October WBro Dennis Schiff has organised a Buddy Holly Evening at Rochdale Football Club

I am pleased to report that the total now stands at over £200k for which I thank each and every one of you

That is an increase of over £100k since the start of this Meeting last year

But the effort must continue both for Lodges and individuals if we are to reach a total befitting the Province of East Lancashire

With over 4 years to go there is still time to consider making a regular personal donation

We have already drawn the winning tickets for the 1000 Club and these will be announced at the Festive Board

I must now briefly mention the MBF Walk on Saturday the 6th May, the team of 6 comprising myself, the Deputy, both Assistants and the Provincial Wardens, were supported by VW Bro Jeff Huddart and WBro Trevor Parvin our "Project Manager"

I think I can safely say that we had a great time and no injuries ... although the JW was complaining of a bad back on the Sunday and he was the youngest member of the team

The total raised by the walk was an incredible £364k and our Province contributed nearly £10k of that fantastic achievement. I was amazed when I visited Lodges and the Sponsorship Form was being passed around with the generosity of the Brethren we had over 300 personal donations

I must thank WBro Trevor Parvin ... we first discussed this last November and he sorted out the Sponsorship Forms, the Liason with the MMH and the MBF and the various Web Site requirements. He did an excellent job ... thank you, Trevor ... it is nearly over

When raising the monies for the Festival please bear in mind the tremendous support that the MBF gives to Local and National Charities:

In particular, Hope for Tomorrow, the MBF will fulfil its commitment to them next year at the Lincolnshire Festival and RW Bro Trevor Walker you can be assured of our presence and financial support next year

The next major Project the MBF will be supporting are 52 Ambulances and Support vehicles for the St John Ambulance

This will cost just over £3m in the next 3 years

In July Leslie and I will attend at the Chancery in London in the presence of our Grand Master and the Duke of Gloucester for the Presentation of the 1st Ambulance which is coming to East Lancashire and I am delighted to say that RW Bro David Sellers and MIRA will be attending to receive the 1st Support vehicle for Cheshire

I do not know MIRAs thoughts on the matter but Leslie thinks that she is going to drive the Ambulance back to Manchester, although the blue lights would help on the M6

It is 12 months since I mentioned that we have also established The Festival Banquet Committee under the Chairmanship of VW Bro Stephen Holt. I can report that they have made good progress in determining a Venue for the Festival Dinner and the other arrangements

ELMBF

Even though much of our charitable efforts are directed to supporting the 2021 Festival we cannot ignore our own charity the ELMBF which will continue to financially support all the Festivals around the country as well as our own beneficiaries

I am pleased to note that many Lodges are still able to make a donation to the ELMBF at their Installation Meetings

The ELMBF continues to provide invaluable help to our less fortunate members and their dependants with financial assistance or advice where necessary, but the Prov Almoner WBro Barry Heal does need your help to identify any of our Brethren or Widows who may need assistance.

He works closely with the MBF and with the East Lancs Masonic Charity for the Craft to ensure the best

He has worked very, very hard and successfully on these initiatives and we will hear soon how much has been raised.

Brethren as you are all aware that we are unique in the Mark degree in East Lancashire in owning two residential complexes at Blackburn and Bolton. They are administered by our own ELMBF charity with a management committee on each complex. They are primarily for Mark Masons or their dependants and relatives, but if there is a vacant property and it does not suit the requirements of anyone on the waiting

list, the committee will certainly consider Craft Masons who are not in the Mark rather than have the property empty. If anyone is aware of someone who might benefit from living in these beautiful surroundings please contact the Provincial Office or the ELMBF Chairman, WBro Howard Nuttall or any of the committee members for advice on how to proceed. Details are on the Web Site

Thanks, are also due to the committees of Cannons Close and Priors Close unseen by many but certainly appreciated

RAMGR

Brethren, Last December we travelled to London to attend the RAMGR Investiture Meeting Five of our Brethren were Appointed to RAMGR .. Brethren, WBros Simon Archer, Garth Green, Peter Hegarty, and Graham Mangham and Fraser McCord, These are all very well deserved ...

GRAND MARK

Brethren, on Tuesday June 13^h we be will be attending the Grand Mark investiture meeting and again we are all grateful to WBro Malcolm McCarthy for the travel and accommodation arrangements.

The Brethren who will receive their 1st Appointments are: as Grand Steward WBro David Rainford, our Prov G Sec, as AGDC WBro George Scaife, as PAGSwdB; WBro Stephen Lawlor, ProvAGDC,

as PGStB, WBros Stephen Barritt, Garry Errock, Prov Asst Sec and Reg Foster.

Also a member of East Lancs but receiving a first Appointment as Grand Steward from another Province, WBro Stephen Priestley a Member of The Rugby Lodge.

The Promotions are: VWBro David Anderson to PGMO, WBro Philip Conn to PGJO, WBro Simon Archer our Prov DC to acting GJD and WBros Gerry Young; Chris Welton; Paul Holt; and Ian Ronson to PGJD

Also members of East Lancs and receiving Promotions, VW Bro Tony Harrison to GJW and VW Bro Jack Forsyth to Past GJW both Members of Arnold Moreton Lodge

Brethren they are all very well earned and deserve your acclamation.

Prov Rank

Brethren I will shortly be investing Brethren with Provincial Grand rank. I congratulate you all on your preferment and hope you have many years to enjoy your new ranks.

The Brethren who have acting rank please support the Provincial team visits and the RAM investiture meeting, I assure you that the best way to get the most enjoyment out of your new rank is to support your colleagues in the Provincial Team as we travel around the Province.

I must now thank all the brethren who make the arrangements for this meeting:

The Provincial Grand Secretary WBro David Rainford and his team,

I must also thank the Event Stewards of the meeting for keeping us secure and giving advice and assistance where needed, the sound engineers, the Para Medics, WBro David Lightbown and the brethren from Blackburn Masonic Hall who provided the Lodge Furniture for today's Meeting. Despite the Lift not working at Richmond Terrace

and once again our Provincial Tyler Ian Ronson for his attendance with all the equipment not only today but at our team visits.

And a special thank you to the Prov Grand Organist WBro Paul Bowen and his Deputy WBro Andrew Braithwaite.

They all carry out their various duties impeccably

Finally I must thank and congratulate the DC team led by WBro Simon Archer

In Conclusion

At my Installation in September 2015 I said that I would focus on Membership, the 2021 Festival and the ELMBF

I hope that what you have heard today demonstrates what we have done in the last year and what we will continue to do but I stress we do need your support and assistance

Please enjoy your Mark and RAM Masonry

Thank you for attending today and your patience

Have a safe journey home when that time comes and may the Great Overseer of the Universe bless you all.