

Worcestershire Mark Annual Meeting – 30th June 2018

Address by the Provincial Grand Master

Brethren of the Mark Province of Worcestershire and Distinguished Visitors – once again, a very warm welcome to you all. It is very gratifying to see so many here today, especially as we had to change our normal meeting date.

It has been a busy year as you can imagine. During the year, I have represented Worcestershire at some 20 Provincial meetings around the country. The hospitality I have received at these meetings has been magnificent and I am delighted to be able to repay some of that hospitality today.

As well as the Provincial meetings, I have attended Grand Lodge and the Royal Ark Mariner Assembly as your PGM. In December at the RAM Assembly, it was super to see W.Bros Roy Piddington and Paul Yarnell receive Royal Ark Mariner Grand Rank and once again, I congratulate them.

Just over 2 weeks ago, a goodly contingent of Worcestershire Mark Masons travelled to Great Queen Street to see several of our Brethren receive Grand Rank appointments from HRH Prince Michael of Kent, the Grand Master. 2 Brethren received active offices – RW Bro Frank Spencer was re-appointed as GDC. Our excellent Chaplain, W.Bro. Justin Parker, was also re-appointed as Assistant Grand Chaplain. As well as these active ranks, I'm very pleased to say that 5 Brethren from the Province received first appointments: W.Bros ...

- Irving Horne – PAGDC
- Simon Humberstone - PAGDC
- Paul Yarnell – PAGDC (an expensive year for Paul in regalia terms!)
- Norman Hill – PGStdB (Moseley Centenary)
- Sean Warner - PGStdB

As you know, Brethren, Grand Lodge is experimenting with the investitures this year, with the June meeting being for active and first appointments. This worked very well, I thought. In September, there will be the investiture for Brethren receiving promotions and W.Bro. Brian Scoffield will be promoted to PGJO, which attracts the title of Very

Worshipful Brother and W.Bro. Adrian Hutt will be promoted to PAGDC. I trust they will be well supported by the Brethren of Worcestershire.

Well done to all of them and let us show our appreciation for their honours.

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate members of the Provincial Grand Directors of Ceremonies and the Almoners and Charity Stewards Lodges who have been honoured by way of their home Provinces. Congratulations to all the recipients of Grand Honours.

Looking at the home front, we have had a busy year in the Province. There have been a number of special meetings and Provincial Team visits, which have been most enjoyable. I won't list them all, but would mention 3 in particular. In July last year, we celebrated Bromsgrove Mark Lodge's 50th anniversary and the WM, W.Bro. John Bentley, received a special certificate from Grand Lodge to mark the occasion. In September, Worcestershire hosted the 4 Provinces' Meeting. We enjoyed a fantastic evening at Moseley Mark Lodge, celebrating their centenary. The centenary warrant was presented by the Deputy Grand Master, RW Bro John Prizeman, and then in an unprecedented ceremony outside London, the Grand Master's Lodge of Instruction team advanced Bro. David Thompson, who has received today the PGM's Token. It was a truly memorable evening.

The third event I'd like to mention took place in April at Eaton Mark, when the Sussex Demonstration Team came to Kings Heath and presented the Making of a Mark Man. This was done superbly, but even better, with the agreement and encouragement of the Craft PGM, RW Bob Vaughan, Craft masons were invited to the demonstration. All the Craft masons I spoke to thought the presentation was wonderful and a goodly number expressed their desire to join the Mark. To top it all off, I then presented a 50-year certificate to VW Bro Ron Gee – it was super to hear about his life and experiences.

I would like to thank all the Provincial Officers who attended these special events and would urge the new Officers appointed today to attend future events – make the most of your year to support the Province – but above all to enjoy your honour.

These special events are marvellous, but perhaps the greatest enjoyment for me as your PGM has been attending Lodges, both formally on installation nights and informally to support an advancement or to present GL certificates and so on. I said last year that I intended to get out and about as much as I could. Universally, I have been welcomed warmly and have enjoyed the company of the Brethren very much indeed and I thank you all for it.

All in all, Brethren, it has been a super year and I believe the Province is in extremely good heart and we look forward to the forthcoming year with anticipation. There will be several team visits and special events, about which you will receive the relevant information in due course.

The next event to take place is the Worcestershire versus Warwickshire cricket match, on August 26th. I know it's the bank holiday weekend, but do try to support this enjoyable and quintessentially English event. Worcestershire are the current holders of the trophy and we will be looking to retain it

Let's hear about any events you may be planning and we can promote and support them.

Brethren, our raison d'être is charity and we've once again had a good year. I am grateful to you all for supporting the Battle Back Charity this year. We have raised some £5,000 for them – well done. We received a presentation on the charity in March at Worcestershire Installed Masters' meeting. Capt. Chris Knight gave us a fascinating insight into what they do for sick and injured service personnel. It's a great charity and I have been glad to support it. This next year, I would again ask Lodges to support a particular charity, with at least one collection from their meetings. The charity I have chosen is the Worcestershire Association of Carers. Their objectives are for the public benefit, to relieve the stresses experienced by carers and people with physical, mental or sensory impairment within the family or home, in the county of Worcestershire, through the provision of information services, support centres and the promotion of the needs of carers. I hope you agree that this is a very worthy cause.

On a national level, there have been two major donations from the Mark degree. Last year's Walk in the Park raised some £440,000 and it has been decided to fund a whole

series of Blood Bikes across England and Wales. The launch and official handover of these bikes will be on August 17th, at the National Motorcycle Museum, just by the NEC. The other major initiative was to donate £3.2 million to the St. John Ambulance Service, to replace their aging fleet of ambulances and support vehicles. A number of these have been delivered already and I am waiting to hear when Worcestershire's vehicle will be ready to present to St. John Ambulance. I would like to take this opportunity of thanking them for their presence here today – just in case!

I hope everyone is aware of the innovation introduced by W.Bro. Mike Gage, Provincial Grand Charity Steward, who has replaced the 100 Club with a new provincial lottery. The first draw, at the end of April, netted the winner £50, considerably more than the previous regular winnings. I might add that it was the Provincial Grand Junior Warden who won it!! If you haven't signed up for the Provincial lottery yet, please get in touch with Mike Gage

Brethren – we often hear that change is inevitable. This is not new – the philosopher Heraclitus wrote in 500BC “Nothing is constant, nothing but change”. We need to constantly change and adapt. But sometimes, change can be tinged with sadness. A major change has happened within the Province today. During the investiture, you will have realised that we have a new Provincial Grand Secretary and a new Assistant Provincial Grand Secretary.

W.Bro. Brian Scoffield has retired as Provincial Grand Secretary after amazing service to the Province and especially to me. When a new PGM is installed, he is naturally a little nervous and uncertain. W.Bro. Brian made the transition from RW Bro Frank to myself seamless and easy. His support and wise words were vital at the time and remain so to this day. Brethren, he has done a marvellous job in steering the Secretariat, with excellent skill and knowledge. As I said earlier, in September he will become a Very Worshipful Brother, which is a just reward for his hard work, advice and wisdom. I shall miss his sometimes daily advice, although I trust he will not disappear into the wilds of Malvern but still be seen out and about. I know one of the things he will be doing is founding the Malvern Priory Lodge of Royal Ark Mariners. He is already working on that and if any Brother here wishes to become a Founder, please get in touch with him. Brian, thank you for all you have done for the Province and for me.

Also retiring is our erstwhile Assistant Provincial Grand Secretary – W.Bro. John Icke. John has worked his socks off for the Province and especially on the IT front. He has maintained and updated the Provincial web site exceedingly well. We all have seen him buzzing around the Province, taking photographs and writing copy to let the Brethren know about events in and around the Province. However, what a lot of people don't know is his skill with the Provincial database, which he set up and maintains. It has proved invaluable, with much more information than the Grand Lodge's Keystone Online. It is personal to Worcestershire and whenever I need information on Brethren, for example when deciding on Provincial ranks, John sends me the most up to date information about who is due for appointment or promotion. As I said it is invaluable and I thank John for all his hard work and dedication.

I cannot let this moment pass without proper acknowledgment of Brian and John's service to the Province and therefore, I have decided to present them both with my Certificate of Merit

Bro Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies, will you please escort W.Bro. Brian and John to me.

Bro Provincial Grand Secretary, will you please read the certificate?

Presentation of PGM's Certificates of Merit.

Brethren – they both thoroughly deserve the certificate and a well-earned rest. Their retirement means that we have a new Provincial Grand Secretary and Assistant Grand Secretary in the persons of W.Bro. Adrian Hutt and W.Bro. Neil Crabbe, who are well known to you. Together with W.Bro. Robin Stanton as Registrar and Bill Southgate as Deputy Secretary, the Secretariat is a very strong team and will continue the good work very efficiently.

It just remains for me to say a few thank you's. Firstly, many thanks to Bro. Steven O'Nyons for providing the fans, which have kept us remarkably cool on this hot day. My thanks go to the Craft Province of Worcestershire and particularly the Provincial Grand Master. Let us not forget Brethren, that we all start as Craft masons. If we wish to grow our lovely degree, our recruiting ground is our Craft Lodges. Please support them as much as you can and bring gentlemen into masonry who will be a credit to you, to

themselves and to Masonry in general. Always be on the lookout for Craft masons who would benefit from joining Mark Masonry – that is all of them!! Let us help them to enjoy our friendly degree.

I would like to thank W.Bro. Barry Holland for attending to his duties as Provincial Retailer. He has not enjoyed the best of health this year and I hope that his poor health is now very much a thing of the past..

I would also like to thank the Provincial Lodge Support Team, under the guidance of W.Bro Paul Milner, who have helped Lodges throughout the year, by attending meetings and filling in offices. I think it has been a successful initiative and I do thank W.Bro Paul and his team of volunteers for his efforts.

My very grateful thanks go to my Deputy and Assistant. Their support, advice and unstinting efforts have been huge and I couldn't have had such a happy year without their help. I do thank you both.

I thank all the Provincial Officers for their support during the year. In particular, the Wardens, W.Bros John Bentley and Eric Lee – the dream team They have done an outstanding job, attending all the installations and many other meetings and events. They can be justly proud of their year.

To the host Lodges for this meeting, Vernon Lodge No 923 and Eaton Lodge No 977, I do thank you for your support. I thank all the visitors for making the journey here today and making this meeting so special.

It is almost impossible to say how grateful I am to the secretarial team and W.Bro Richard Green and his DC team for their help and support, not just in organising today's meeting but for all they have done in the past year in so many ways, not least keeping me in line and not letting me make too many mistakes. I thank you.

And finally Brethren of the Mark Province of Worcestershire, I thank **you** for making my third year as PGM so enjoyable. I thank you for accepting me so openly and for the warmth of welcome I have received throughout the Province.

May the Great Overseer and the Supreme Commander of the Universe bless you and keep you safe.