

## **Provincial Grand Master's address to Provincial Grand Lodge 13th June 2008**

Brethren,

I have already welcomed our honoured guests individually; can I now welcome all members of the Province and their guests who are here in such good numbers and thank them for their kind support today. I know many couldn't make the revised date and I am sure you are aware that we moved our normal meeting from yesterday to today to assist this Centre accommodate an important letting. This extra income will indirectly benefit us all and I would like to place on record my thanks to the Provincial Grand Master of the Craft and this Centre for their kind donation to our BMBA charity in acknowledgement.

We heard earlier in the obituary roll, the mention of the sad loss of our Past Provincial Secretary, Peter Parsons some 2.5 weeks after our last Provincial meeting. In fact that meeting was, I think, the last he ever attended. I wish to acknowledge the effort that he made that day on my behalf and on the behalf of the Province.

Those of you who have read it can see from the Secretary's report that membership is slightly down but these figures are now nearly a year out of date and the current year's are better with an average of almost 2 candidates per Lodge. Brethren this is good but please do not relax your efforts to spread the word about the Mark Degree.

Whilst we learn in the Craft how to improve our conduct as men and towards our fellow man, in the Mark Degree the keystone, in uniting the arch stones, alludes to the formation of deeper friendships and epitomises this friendly degree; don't let your Masonic friends miss out.

With this in mind the Province has been busy on the PR front; my thanks to Terry Speight as PR Officer. We have a web site up and running [www.berksmark.org.uk](http://www.berksmark.org.uk), which is linked to the Craft and Royal Arch websites; it is excellent so please take a look. My thanks to our Secretary, Dick Oliver, and in particular his Deputy, Roy Richardson, for putting it together. I am going to be asking all Lodges to add the details of the site to their summons in the future.

Also an information leaflet has been produced by our hardworking Provincial Secretary and my thanks to the Provincial Grand Master of the Craft, Mike Hooton, who has kindly allowed us to circulate it to all his Craft Lodges. This leaflet will be a useful sales tool for Lodge Secretaries so they will all receive a supply.

I am delighted with the progress made in the publicity field this year; so pleased, in fact, that I feel we should produce a leaflet for the Royal Ark Mariner Degree.

My deputy and myself have visited every lodge at least once, and in most cases, twice during the year. We have found the standard of ritual generally good but I do urge brethren not able, for whatever reason, to carry out their office without a crib sheet to delegate to someone else - we will think more of them for doing so.

At the meeting of Grand Lodge on Tuesday five of our members were honoured: W Bro Brian Atkinson, our Almoner, was promoted to Past Grand Junior Deacon, W Bro's John Pollard and Roger Taylor, our Treasurer, to Past Assistant Grand Director of Ceremonies, W Bro Graham Seeman to Past Assistant Grand Sword Bearer and last, and by no means least, W Bro Dick Olliver, our Secretary, to Assistant Grand Director of Ceremonies and how splendid you look in your chain today. My congratulations to you all for your past services and, I hope, future efforts for the Province. Also in December, Royal Ark Mariner Grand Rank was conferred on our Craft Provincial Grand Master, Mike Hooton, Alan Smee

our new Director of Ceremonies and Pat Leonard. Well done to them all. Congratulations also to all the Provincial Officers appointed or promoted today; it is for your past and future efforts. It is an honour which carries with it responsibilities to help your Lodges with the more junior members and spreading the Mark message to others.

As you all know by now the division of BOMBA between Berkshire and Oxfordshire took place last September and may I reciprocate the comments made by RW Bro Richard Slade at his meeting last month. It was smoothly and amicably progressed throughout and I thank him publicly for his co-operation. It is a delight to have you as a neighbouring Provincial Grand Master. This Province has enthusiastically embraced the new BMBA (BeMBA) charity and I am pleased that funds have increased enabling us to offer more help to our members. It has also meant that at the beginning of this current year I was able to present a substantial cheque to the Craft 2011 Festival from the Mark Degree.

Brethren my thanks to our Provincial Secretary for today's preparations; Dick, your first time at the sharp end. Well done and I know you have had valued support from your Deputy, Roy. My thanks also to the two lodges Caduceus and Friendship & Care under whose banners today's meeting has been held. Lastly to our now retired Director of Ceremonies and his team for all their hard work; and now Bro Director of Ceremonies would you conduct W Bro Bob Rumbold to me.

Bob,

You have served this Province as Assistant, Deputy and Director of Ceremonies for nearly 10 years, as well as being Secretary and Scribe of Friendship & Care Mark and RAM. You were appointed a Grand Steward in 2003 and promoted to PGSD last year.

I am sure many brethren are not aware of your deteriorating eyesight - so determined are you to carry on as normal. You and Barbara have decided to retire to Carmarthen, our loss is RW Bro Nigel Adams's gain - we hope you will visit us as often as possible. Thank you so much for your service to this Province, your support and advice. I now present you with a set of Champagne flutes and a bottle of Pink Champagne to fill them with. Well Done.

Brethren, I leave you with a final thought, the rejection of the keystone in our ceremony demonstrates expectation disappointed and thereby teaches us humility in all we do.

Enjoy your Mark Masonry and I look forward to another happy year with you all.

Thank you.