

## **Provincial Grand Master's address to Provincial Grand Lodge 11th June 2009**

Brethren,

Thank you all for your attendance here today including our many guests. In these straightened economic times it is good to see such support and I am absolutely delighted to say that we have seen a net increase in membership during this year in both the Mark and RAM.

This does not just happen and I thank you all for your recruiting efforts .....keep it up. In this context the leaflet on the Mark has proved an invaluable aid, as is the website; please continue to use them to help spread the word about the Mark Degree. Of course, we continue to have close co-operation with the Craft and, naturally, recruitment to that is our first priority.

Two days ago, on Tuesday at Grand Lodge, my Deputy, VW Nick, was promoted to Past Grand Master Overseer. Mike Hooton, our Craft PGM, was promoted to Past Grand Junior Overseer and, therefore, is now a VW Bro. Ben Grace was promoted to Past Grand Senior Deacon, Pat Camplin and David Hopkin were promoted to Past Grand Junior Deacon and finally, Peter Rushton was appointed Grand Steward and how smart he looks in his new chain! Our congratulations to them all.

Also in December John Rowe and Peter Atkins received Grand Rank in the Antient and Honourable Fraternity of Royal Ark Mariners. Congratulations also to all the Provincial Officers I have invested today for both past and, we hope, future efforts for this order. Reshuffles are in vogue at present and it will not have escaped your notice that our Provincial Charity Steward and Almoner have retired. I will return to them in a minute, but I must thank John Stocker and John Rowe respectively for taking on these very important appointments.

I, and my Executive, have visited all the Mark and Royal Ark Mariner Lodges in the Province this year and can I thank you all for the warm and friendly welcome you have given us on every occasion. One of the highlights this last year was the visit to Porchester to help celebrate 150 years since their consecration and dedicate their first ever banner (they have taken a while to save up) and, as Porchester had previously been in the Provinces of Berkshire and Hampshire and Berkshire and Oxfordshire, the PGM's of Hampshire and Isle of Wight and Oxfordshire, together with their wives, joined us in that celebration. My thanks go to W Bro Terry Speight for all his efforts in organising the production of the banner, the celebration meeting and dinner.

Our Craft Festival in 2011 is fast approaching and the alms collection today will be to that appeal via BMBA and, in anticipation of that, I would like to make a further presentation of £2,000 to Mike Hooton towards that appeal. (Bro Director of Ceremonies would you escort VW Bro Mike to me).

Meetings like this do not just happen. My thanks go to my Secretary, Dick Olliver, and his Deputy, Roy, for all their hard work and our Director of Ceremonies, Alan, and his team; also the two Lodges under whose banners we meet: Wilder and Charles Wilkinson for stewarding.

Obviously the Province doesn't run itself and two stalwarts of this Province for many years have retired this year: VW Bro Geoff Finney and W Bro Brian Atkinson. Geoff Finney has been Charity Steward for 21 years, so before this Province was constituted in 1994. As part of his duties he was Treasurer of BOMBA and subsequently BMBA when the fund was divided following the separation of Berkshire and Oxfordshire. That is some record of

service. Brian Atkinson is from the same mould, having been an excellent and caring Provincial Almoner for over 11 years. Together they have 50 years in Provincial office and we owe them both a great debt of gratitude. Bro Director of Ceremonies please conduct both of them to me.

Finally Brethren it is quite evident to me, and I am sure to all today, that if Masonic principles had guided the actions of some of the leaders in public life we would not be experiencing the present furore in Westminster and the disillusionment rife amongst the general public. We are all, of course, Craft Masons and while that last passage delivered to an initiate, the Charge, sums up the standards for our life and actions, similarly the last section of the Advancement ceremony emphasises the deeper friendship of the Mark Degree.

I leave you with one thought .... In the Mark Degree in this Province we do not have Lodge mentors because it is my view that they are not needed, we are all mentors. We are the friendly degree, always have been and, I'm sure, always will be. Do remember whether you know a member or not, talk to him. He is, or will become, your next best friend.

Thank you all, have a good summer break.