

## **Provincial Grand Master's address to Provincial Grand Lodge 9th June 2011**

Brethren,

May I first congratulate all those I have invested and promoted today. It is your special day and you should be proud of what you have achieved so far and I look forward to your further support and enthusiasm in the future.

I have welcomed, and made a presentation to, some of this year's candidates and I hope they develop a similar appreciation and enthusiasm for this degree. That enthusiasm should include encouraging Craft Masons to share our enjoyment of this happy degree.

On that subject we have presented our first *Mark Meets the Craft* which took the form of a question and answer session and was well received. My thanks to my Deputy, Nick, for all his hard work preparing the presentation. We must keep up our efforts on membership, please use the leaflets and the excellent website where the leaflet can also be downloaded.

Congratulations to those who received Grand Honours on Tuesday. Alan Smee, our Past Director of Ceremonies, was promoted to Grand Senior Deacon and it's nice to see you with your chain of office. Tim Dummer and Len Starling received first appointments to Past Assistant Grand Director of Ceremonies; our hardworking Deputy Secretary, Roy Richardson, to Past Assistant Grand Sword Bearer and Mike Davis to Past Assistant Grand Standard Bearer. My congratulations also go to Doug Jamieson and Peter Lloyd on receiving Royal Ark Mariner Grand Rank last December. Members of the Province who received Grand Honours from other Provinces include Frank Hinchliffe, promoted to Past Grand Junior Deacon and Greville Newson-Smith appointed to Past Assistant Grand Director of Ceremonies. Well done to them all.

Of course, promotion for one of the recipients, Tim Dummer, was to mark the centenary of Valentia Lodge. Tim organised a great celebration last Autumn at Wellington College when we were joined by RW Bro Richard Slade, Provincial Grand Master for Oxfordshire, RW Bro Peter Connolly, Provincial Grand Master for West Lancashire and RW Bro John Prizeman, Provincial Grand Master for Hampshire and Isle of Wight. As well as that evening we have had two Provincial visits and I thank last year's Provincial Team, especially my enthusiastic Wardens, for their support at so many meetings and Installations.

At the Grand Lodge meeting on Tuesday the Pro Grand Master, MW Bro John Hale, announced his retirement in September and we will all miss him; the standing ovation he received was richly deserved. On the subject of Grand Lodge, management of Mark Mason's Hall, now labelled as 86 St. James's, has improved. They appear to be in profit and we look forward to positive year-end figures in September. We all hope this will lead to an era of more stability in Grand Lodge fees where recent increases has hit multiple membership in particular quite hard! Do remember that the Installed Master and Royal Ark Mariner Lodges have reduced fees.

BeMBA has had a good year (as you will have noticed) after our appeal for support. We need to build that fund somewhat because as many of you are aware we have a festival for the Mark Benevolent Fund in 2017 and undoubtedly BeMBA's income will drop during that fund raising period. On that issue I have asked my Deputy to set up a Festival Committee to organise all aspects. I can say that the Festival launch will not be until next year, largely because most of our membership has just finished an extremely successful Craft Festival which raised £2,276,000.50.

Our congratulations go to RW Bro Mike Hooton and especially his team led by John Nixon. I am sure RW Bro Mike you can retire very happy.

The appeal to be launched next year will not have a specific target - we will just do the best

we can remembering that fund raising also includes that three letter word “fun”. We have started preparations and opened a Relief Chest (as you heard earlier) and the collection today will be going into that Relief Chest.

Although I say this every year I really do thank my Secretary, Dick, his Deputy, Roy and Graham, our Director of Ceremonies, for their hard work today and throughout the year. It seems amazing to me that I am now starting my fifth year as your Provincial Grand Master.

I extend my personal thanks to you all for your continuing warm welcome when visiting your Lodges, not just as your Provincial Grand Master but as a friend.

Thank you for your support today.