

Provincial Grand Master's address to Provincial Grand Lodge 13th September 2013

Brethren,

I don't intend to keep you very long but I do need to say a few words.

Firstly may I say how proud, privileged and honoured I am to become your Provincial Grand Master.

Secondly I must thank all of you who have sent me messages of congratulations via email, letter or telephone calls, it has been overwhelming and a most humbling experience. I am most grateful to you all and thank you most sincerely for your kind thoughts and good wishes.

I would normally have welcomed all our honoured guests from other Provinces earlier in the programme and asked them to stand but as time is rather pressing I will simply tell you that we have been supported by 16 Provincial Grand Masters and 6 other RW Brethren, 13 Deputy Provincial Grand Masters, 6 Assistant Provincial Grand Masters, 16 Provincial Grand Secretaries and 18 other official Provincial visitors.

Furthermore demonstrating the excellent relationship we have with the Craft we have a full house the Provincial Grand Master, Deputy Provincial Grand Master, Assistant Provincial Grand Master, Provincial Grand Secretary and Assistant Provincial Grand Secretary.

From the Royal Arch we have the Deputy Grand Superintendent.

From the Ancient & Accepted Rite we welcome the new Inspector General for Berkshire.

From the Knight Templar Priests of Oxfordshire, Berkshire & Buckinghamshire the District Grand Superintendent.

And from the Order of the Secret Monitor the Provincial Grand Supreme Ruler for Oxfordshire, Berkshire & Buckinghamshire.

Brethren I have taken over a Province in fine health and good heart and I thank my predecessors for all they have done for this Province.

I must particularly thank my immediate predecessor, RW Bro Peter James Sands who has served this Province in an active position almost continuously for 29 years, a remarkable feat. He will be a big act to follow but I can assure you I will do my best to follow in his footsteps but will need your help to do so. In his 6 years as our Provincial Grand Master he has set the hallmarks for a happy and successful Province and the principles by which our 2017 Festival will be run.

Of course, Brethren I would like to see more mandates being taken up but let me now assure you that those principles set by Peter will not change. There will be no targets for either Lodges or the Province; we will continue to raise what we can whilst having fun, enjoying ourselves and involving family and friends wherever and whenever possible. All the functions and fund raising events we have organised so far have been very successful and long may that continue. On that note Brethren I know you all will be wondering what will happen to the Lottery Bonus Ball Game. Don't worry; it will continue as I know you would all be extremely disappointed if it didn't.

Whilst I'm talking about the 2017 Festival I would like to inform you that the Festival function is due to be held over the weekend of the 7th and 8th July 2017 and the Saturday night will be held

at Trunkwell House near Reading. Of course more information will follow as we get closer to the date.

In fact, Brethren my focus will be, "If it ain't broke don't fix it". With that in mind the Provincial Grand Master's Reception & Dinner will be held on Friday 10th January 2014 and, hopefully, many of you will be able to attend. In August I held a dinner for this year's Active Provincial Officers which was well received. At this dinner I informed them of what will happen during their year of office and I look forward to seeing many of them on the circuit this year. This dinner will also continue in the years to come. The Provincial Secretary (Mike Sanders) following a very successful luncheon last year for Lodge Secretaries and their partners will be holding another luncheon on Sunday 3rd November, again at his golf club.

Brethren you will see from the Secretary's report that our membership continues to fall and of course I would like to change that.

We are of course fishing from a Craft and Chapter pool of talent, but we are here because we enjoy this degree so please share that enjoyment with your friends in the Craft and Chapter. As you know we do have a leaflet, that is available to download from the website, www.berksmark.org.uk, and I ask you to use this and distribute a copy to your friends and colleagues who you believe would be interested and will benefit from joining our friendly degree. We also have at our disposal a presentation called "Mark Meets the Craft" which I, my Deputy and Secretary would be pleased to present to your individual Craft Lodges if required. Please call one of us to arrange this. I am also looking at other ways that we, your executive, can help with recruitment but it is early days and more of this as my period as your Provincial Grand Master progresses.

I must also thank my penultimate predecessor RW Bro Alan Brunning and W Bro Bob Rumbold for acting as Presiding Officer and Deputy to start things off this morning. I suppose you could say these two brethren are somewhat responsible for me becoming your Provincial Grand Master. W Bro Bob put me forward for the office of Deputy Provincial Grand Secretary some 10 years ago and RW Bro Alan gave me that job hence putting me "on the ladder so to speak". Thank you both I am most grateful. Bro Secretary will you record our thanks.

My congratulations to those Berkshire members who received first appointments or promotions at the meeting of Grand Lodge in June.

First Appointments

W Bro Mike Sanders as Assistant Director of Ceremonies
W Bro David Wiltcher as Past Assistant Director of Ceremonies
W Bro John Stocker as Past Assistant Grand Sword Bearer
W Bro Tony Hardiman as Past Assistant Grand Standard Bearer

Promotions

RW Bro Michael Lawson to Past Grand Senior Warden
RW Bro Malcolm Aish to Past Grand Junior Warden
W Bro Graham Seeman to Past Grand Junior Deacon

Re- Appointments

RW Bro John Wright as Deputy President of the General Board

and in December W Bro Mike Saunders will receive RAMGR.

Well done to them all.

Similar congratulations goes to all those Provincial Officers I have invested for the first time or promoted and re-appointed today; it is a special day for you too. Very well done and I look forward to your continued efforts in future years particularly visiting around the Province.

I also thank all the newly advanced brethren for attending their first Provincial Meeting and I trust it will not be your last. Of course I welcomed you earlier and presented each of you with a special enamelled Provincial token. This token is only presented to those Advancees who attend the Provincial meeting following their Advancement so it is quite special.

Brother Director of Ceremonies will you please bring RW Bro Peter Harbourne to me.

RW Bro Peter it gives me great pleasure to present you with this cheque towards the 146th Anniversary Festival 2014 of The Mark Benevolent Fund being held in Milton Keynes over the weekend of Friday and Saturday 18th and 19th July 2014.

Brethren if you would like to attend the Buckinghamshire Festival the details are available on our website.

The collection today will go towards the 2017 Festival so I would ask you to complete the gift aid envelopes on your chairs and deposit them in the receptacals provided as you retire from the Lodge.

Brethren these meetings don't just happen a lot of hard work goes into their organisation so I extend my personal thanks to the Provincial Secretary, Mike Sanders for organising today ably supported by his Deputy, David Green. Also my thanks to our new Director of Ceremonies, Steve Berkshire and his team and the two Lodges, Wallingford and Wantage under whose banners we have met today.

Finally, I thank all of you for your enthusiastic support for both myself and W Bro Graham as we take up the reins of this splendid Province. Let us all enjoy our Mark Masonry for as we say "Among Mark Master Masons you will ever find friends".

Brethren, may the Great Overseer of the Universe bless and keep you well and I look forward to seeing you during the year.