

Brethren Good Evening and a warm welcome, to this Provincial meeting, and another new beginning.

We are well aware of the immense calls on your time, be they family, business, other leisure activities or other Masonic commitments, however you have still found, or made the time to be with us today to support the Province, thank you, we really do appreciate it.

It is also wonderful as I said earlier to welcome back our distinguished guests, many of them good friends, it is so good to see you all here once again.

Brethren I make no apology for repeating that I am immensely proud, and it is a great Honour to be PGM of this wonderful Province of ours which celebrates its 250th Anniversary on 2nd May next year.

I am very well aware of the duties that devolve on me as its Head, this privilege is turned into an absolute pleasure with your continued encouragement & support.

My address to you this evening includes as always, many thank you's to the those who have, and to those that I hope will continue, to contribute to the future success of this Province.

I emphasise that this Province is run by a very capable and Professional team who are all good friends and an absolute joy to work with.

I wish to remind you all of the two most important objectives that our Provincial Care Team are addressing.

- 1) **ONE – to encourage members to attend their Lodges** - in greater numbers and help us to make Lodge meetings more focused by reducing the time spent on peripheral Lodge meeting matters and concentrate on the Ceremonies by implementing our new suggested time saving initiatives.

We understand that some members are still cautious about attending their Lodges, however, we must gently encourage them that it **IS** safe to return.

- 2) **TWO, Attraction** - of the right calibre of men to join our fraternity. The past marketing campaigns and a huge effort by many have led to the Initiation of over 100 new members in the last 12 months with many more awaiting Initiation.

Our Provincial Care Team continue to work hard in encouraging all Lodges to take good care of all our members especially our newer ones.

Our third launch of the Pathway Project, and the Pro Grand Masters Membership Challenge have been well received by most Lodges, both Initiatives are beginning to bear fruit, however, we all understand and accept, that these are long term projects, Rome wasn't built in a day and nor was King Solomons Temple!

We need to work hard on attraction and retention but at the same time be patient, thoughtful & caring.

We continue to encourage the Pro Grand Masters 'Yes If' not 'No because' approach!

I am pleased to report that from over 200 Summonses I have seen since the beginning of September only a very few had a Talk or Presentation, all the others had a Ceremony, that is very encouraging, as you all know I am trying hard to discourage 'Dummy Ceremonies' they are simply rehearsal's.

We now congratulate once again all those Brethren who have been appointed and re-appointed to Active & Past Provincial Grand Rank this evening.

It has been my great pleasure to reappoint our Deputy VW Bro Brian Carruthers and Assistant W Bro Andy Green; both Brethren are well known to you all, as are our new Provincial Grand Wardens, we wish you all well in your duties over the next 12 months.

We thank those retiring Provincial Officers who have served the Province so well, especially our Provincial Grand Secretary W Bro Paul Wallace who retires today, we wish his successor W Bro Tim Dixon and his team good luck in their endeavors.

I have worked with W Bro Paul both as Scribe E in the RA and for the last 4 years as Provincial Grand Secretary he has done a 1st Class Job despite what I have said about him over those years!!

I will have much more to say about you Paul at the FB at the appropriate time, but for now I thank you on behalf of the whole Province for a job incredibly well done – applause!!

We also say goodbye today to W Bro Ian Nesbitt who stands down as Provincial Grand Charity Steward having served in that Office for 5 years and before that as Asst Sec. for 4 years and ADC for 2 years a great stint, very many thanks on behalf of the Province for all your past hard work.

What the Brethren won't know is that Ian is the Custodian of the Masonic Hall at Syston and during the recent floods in mid October he, his Wife Carol and Son Stuart WM of my Mother Lodge Humber Stone, spent the whole night at the Hall pumping out water from the cellar, definitely well beyond the call of duty.

I will have a little more to say about you at the Festive Board also.

We all wish your successor W Bro Nic Merrett well in his new role as Charity Steward as well as Chairing the L & R Freemasons Charity Committee.

I would like to especially thank again our retiring Wardens Charles Bentley who takes on his new role at Prov G Supt of Works officially today and at this time I would pay a huge tribute to W Bro Garry Symonds who retires from that position today after 7 years in post.

Garry knows every inch of this building's 4 floors and has done an amazing job for us. Well done, Garry, I'm sure that your advice & support will be called upon from time to time in the future.

Again I will have a little more to say to you at the Festive Board.

Martin Stephenson also stands down after an excellent year as our Prov. Junior GW thank you once again Martin.

I thank W Bro David Wykes our registrar and I especially thank Bro's Jaswant Gohill and Derek Andrews for their work in producing our new 'Blue' year book.

David assured me that this edition would be the best ever! It certainly is an improvement, however there is still a way to go with it.

I do agree with David the book can only be as good as the information he is given!

I have written, or am in the process of writing to all the Provincial Grand Officers who are retiring today to thank them all once again most sincerely for their dedication to their respective duties, their support and commitment has been much appreciated.

I congratulate all those Brethren who will be invested on Thursday December 14th at the Provincial Grand Lodge Promotions meeting and I thank the Lodge of the Flaming Torch for moving their meeting to accommodate us, I hope you will all attend.

These Brethren are promoted to their new ranks today, I know they will wear their new apron badges & collar jewels with the pride that is so well deserved.

I would also like to thank all the members of the Finance & Management, Craft Executive and all the other committees who have worked so hard during what has been a very testing few years for us all.

I sincerely thank Nicola Holyoake & her team for their exceptional work at FMH London Road Leicester helping to keep it in the excellent condition that we all see it in today and of course for their work in the catering department and our Commercial Business Devonshire Place.

As you all know Nicola retires today, we will miss her greatly, she has done an amazing job for us for over 26 years which led to me presenting her with the PGM's Certificate of Merit award last year.

We also thank the Managers of the other Masonic Halls in both Counties.

I also offer my thanks to the Light Blue Club especially its Chairman Dennis Crommentuijn and his committee for their continuing activities and their support during the last 12 months, especially the Initiates evening they ran for us, so well and so successfully.

Many Light Blue Club members were Founders of the New Union of Rugby Lodge the 80th Lodge in the Province which continues to go from strength to strength.

Theme Lodges like the Union of Rugby Lodge do set a great example of fellowship and enjoyment.

Another example is the Gabriel Newton Lodge which was struggling. We recently re-purposed it as a Cricketers Lodge, it has gone from 8 members to over 22 almost overnight with more applying to join all the time and a double Initiation Ceremony on December 1st.

We have also rescued the Jason Lodge and re-purposed that Lodge as Cycling Lodge, we now hope to turn the St James' Lodge into a Golfing Lodge and the Gateway Lodge into another themed Lodge yet to be decided, perhaps a Construction/Builders Lodge? We will see how that turns out.

Clearly this is a recipe for success.

I am sure you would want me to refer to our Charitable activities in respect of the L & R Freemasons Charity (LRFC)

Please support your Lodge Charity Stewards and also donate to the November Challenge collection.

No envelopes any more Brethren which will save the MCF £60K each year printing them!

Brethren, please make sure you use the QR code to donate after the meeting if you have not already done so and encourage all your Lodge members to do so, they don't have to wait until your next meeting money can be donated anytime.

Remember you can donate in other ways as well for those of you who still use cheque books!

A brief word in support of our RMBl home Devonshire Court, I wrote out to all Lodges for a second time in September urging them to book a date for a Coffee or Quiz morning, please support it Brethren.

Now Brethren as you are all aware these occasions don't just happen; a tremendous amount of hard work goes into the planning & organisation of a day such as this.

Our Provincial Grand Secretary

W Bro Paul Wallace and his Assistant Tim Dixon together with their assistants Paul Simpson and Richard Barnett, assisted by our executive co-ordinator Sandy Tanna have worked extremely hard in preparing for today's meeting, I thank them all.

At the same time the secretariat have continued to be very busy implementing the Hermes project.

I thank them most sincerely, however I pay a great tribute to John Goldsmith who is our Provincial Hermes Champion, he has been outstanding in this regard.

The ability of our Prov. GDC Rob Wood and his team of Deputies & Assistants is there for all to see, I thank them all once again for all their work in preparing for today.

I also thank the members of the Derek Buswell Lodge of Provincial Grand Stewards so ably led by W Bro's David Pearson & Peter Jackson.

They all look so distinctive in their Red Regalia, and have done a splendid job of supervising the car park from early this morning, greeting our visitors and numerous other duties, I thank all of them very much indeed.

It is a well-worn cliché & I make no apology for repeating it, that all the appointments given today are not only for the contribution you have made to

your Lodges in the past, but they are in anticipation of your support & the promotion our Provincial initiatives, not just this year but in the future.

I remind you all of our Prov Grand Mentor Dale Page's favorite saying: with Rank comes responsibility!

Brethren, in April the Grand Master was please to appoint W Bro's Tim Dixon, David Highton, Dale Page and Nick Briartore to the rank of PAGDC, we warmly congratulate them all.

Applause...

Furthermore, at Grand Lodge on Wednesday June 14th almost 30 members of the Province were present to see V W Bro Michael Herbert presented with the Grand Masters order of Service to Masonry. What an amazing Honour for Michael and indeed this Province. Only 12 of these awards can be in existence at any one time, there are only 8 currently held throughout England & Wales, Michael has one as does W Bro Aubrey Newman, so in this the Province of Leicestershire & Rutland we hold 25% of them – that must be an all-time record!

Since the introduction of the award in 1946 only 82 have been presented.

It was my pleasure to write to all the Brethren in the Province announcing Michaels award.

Applause:

Brethren, our Province continues to be in very good heart, despite the recorded 51 deaths since last November and continuing resignations, for many different reasons over the last 12 months.

On the positive side, as I said we have initiated over 100 brethren since November 2022 and have many more awaiting Initiation which is most encouraging.

Finally Brethren, there are many challenges & opportunities that early 21st Century Freemasonry presents to us all, however most of us here today realise &

appreciate that membership of other Orders especially the Royal Arch does extend our knowledge and therefore commitment to Freemasonry.

Statistics prove that Brethren who are RA Masons and/or members of other Orders are less likely to resign.

This is a powerful message Brethren, Exaltation should be the inspiration of every Freemason, rather than just another Order to join.

The RA should be the First! In the opinion of the Grand Master and the Pro Grand Master, who would disagree with them? being a Freemason involves 4 steps not 3!

Brethren all, look after our new members – they are our future.

Before I finish Brethren, History is interesting and the past has great value, however we don't live in the Past, our interest is, as it should be, in the future, its where we live, we need to send out this message to the all the suitable young men out there.

We are encouraged to use more modern language and I support it:

We changed Brotherly Love - to Friendship

We changed Relief - to Service and

We changed Truth - to Integrity and Respect

These words Brethren mean much more to the modern man who we must attract as members.

We cannot expect that more new members will just appear, it is up to us all in this room today, it is a collective responsibility, it is not just me, the Provincial Mentor or Membership Officers or just the Provincial Care team.

It is your Lodge and your responsibility!

Brethren HOPE is no substitute for ACTION!

In conclusion – We have put together another strong Provincial team this year, & I assure you that we will all work tirelessly on your behalf to ensure that our Province operates efficiently, in good spirits with much good humor, so YOUR Province can continue to flourish & grow to the advantage of all.

Thank you all once again for your support here today, we do value it greatly, please continue to enjoy your Freemasonry and please smile at every opportunity.

Thank you for listening – and I conclude with the words of one of my predecessor's:

Rt W Bro Gayton Taylor who would always conclude his address with the words:

May the Great Architect of the Universe continue to reign in your hearts & minds forevermore.

God, Bless you all. PCK November 24th 2023