

Provincial Grand Lodge of Worcestershire



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ADDRESS OF THE PROVINCIAL GRAND MASTER
PROVINCIAL GRAND LODGE
SATURDAY, 22nd JUNE 2002

Thank you all for attending Provincial Grand Lodge this afternoon with my particular thanks to our distinguished visitors who regularly sacrifice their time to be with us. I will, as is our usual custom, introduce them to you all, but I ask you to reserve your approval and thanks until I have completed their introduction.

During the latter part of the year, the then Deputy Provincial Grand Master, Robert Whitlock, intimated at 83 he thought it was time to retire. I cannot think of any one mason who has made a more substantial contribution to our Province, first as Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies, appointed as Assistant Provincial Grand Master in 1987 and Deputy Provincial Grand Master in 1993. Not only has he been a figure head throughout the Province, but he has spent two mornings a week in the Provincial Office, which he still continues to do. He has been both a friend and adviser to me and we shall all miss him!

As a token of our entire respect I now have the greatest pleasure in presenting you with this cheque on behalf of the members of the Province. Please spend it wisely, and save some for your celebration of 50 years in freemasonry on December 9th, when with the greatest pleasure I will present you with your Certificate.

In his place I was able to appoint, and invest at Worcestershire Installed Masters Lodge in January, Bro Richard Goddard as Deputy Provincial Grand Master. He is well known to you all and needs no words of mine to praise his dedication to Freemasonry and to the Province of Worcestershire.

At the same Ceremony I Invested Bro Robert Vaughan as an Assistant Provincial Grand Master. He has been a great worker on our behalf, without ever seeking the limelight and he is already proving his worth. I was pleased that they received their appropriate Ranks at the Annual Investiture at Grand Lodge in April, and I know you will all wish them well in the future.

I likewise must now thank our new Senior Assistant Provincial Grand Master, Bro Tony Newark for his management of the most successful Training and Education Seminars and his willingness at all times to attend Lodges and functions on our behalf, and Bro Colin Brown, who as our Information Officer has been responsible for all the organisation of Freemasonry in the Community within our Province. I must also thank the Provincial Secretary and his staff, and the Provincial Treasurer, Bro Stuart Edwards for keeping us on the straight and narrow.

This is my 10th report on the state of the Province, and I am pleased to say that we are in good heart, financially stable, administratively strong and without any

disciplinary proceedings for the 9th year in succession, and that our net loss in membership for last year was 30 brethren, a significant improvement on past years.

Whilst there is still room for us to improve on our membership, I am most pleased with the enthusiasm engendered by you all for Freemasonry in the Community.

We are now on the threshold of this national event and I hope it will be a blueprint for similar activities in the long term within the Province.

I would also mention the long standing friendship we have with our neighbouring Provinces, and that in common with Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Shropshire and Monmouthshire we shall be celebrating 250 years of official recognition in 2003.

To celebrate this event, to be known as the Five Shires Anniversary celebration, we shall be jointly holding a dinner at the Metropole Hotel on Friday, 6th June 2003 at which wives and partners will be most welcome. It is hoped that the Grand Master will attend.

I have been invited to be President for the evening and I hope you will support me, and our Province at the event.

Expect to hear more about this in the future.

Last year I encouraged you to support local charities that are dear to you, and nominated 3 charities, The New Samaritan Fund, the Worcestershire County Air Ambulance and the Library and Museum Trust, and I asked you to consider sending one charity box to each during the year. This has proved most satisfactory with donations of £5,700 to the New Masonic Samaritan Fund, £7,600 to the County Air Ambulance and £7,200 to the Library and Museum Trust.

For the forthcoming year I wish to renominate the New Samaritan Fund, of which a number of our brethren have received tremendous assistance from during the year, the MacMillan Worcestershire Prostate Cancer Appeal and the Acorns Children's Hospice development at Worcester. Further information regarding these charities will be sent to your Charity Steward fairly soon.

As far as the Library and Museum is concerned, and you know it is very important to me, and to us all, I am giving them permission under the Chairmanship of The Deputy Provincial Grand Master, and with my total support, to launch an appeal to coincide with the new season in September for the expansion of the Museum premises.

We have been begging the issue to long, plugging holes as some of our most important artefacts deteriorate.

I judge the time has now come when I can ask you all to support a major appeal with the same enthusiasm that you gave to our recent Festival, only this time we shall be doing it for our own Province with some lasting bricks and mortar to remind us of the challenge.

Some two years ago I spoke to you about the Deputy Grand Master's report on Grand Ranks.

This had an adverse effect on our allocation.

His report has now been extended to Provincial Appointments, and is once again numerically based, rather than by the number of Lodges in any particular Province and that it should be merit-based and not the length of time served in our ORDER.

The formula is based upon one appointment for every 50 members, giving us a total of 75 first Appointments as against our normal 104, whilst promotions are restricted to 80% of first appointments giving us 60 as against our normal 120. As you might imagine this has caused me, and many other Provincial Grand Masters serious misgivings as it ends our traditional and well tried systems of awarding Provincial Ranks. This will be put to Grand Lodge in September, no doubt passed, and then enshrined in the Book of Constitutions. It was due to be implemented on January 1st 2003.

If we have won anything by our representations, implementation has now been postponed until January 1st 2005 so that we may make transitional arrangements to comply with those changes more comfortably.

This, then, will be the last Provincial Grand Lodge held under our own disciplines. Next year we will have to go some way to acknowledge Grand Lodge's requirements. We shall be meeting shortly to consider the new criteria for advancement in the Province and we will make our deliberations known to you in the near future, when I shall value any comments, particularly through Worcestershire Associated Masonic Lodges, to ensure a fairness that is acceptable to you all.

My thanks go to all those Acting Provincial Officers and Provincial Representatives who either supported us by their presence or independently visit Lodges and submit most valuable reports which of course will be of even more importance in the future.

And my thanks to those Officers appointed and promoted for their support during the forthcoming year and to those hard working brethren who carry out the necessary arrangements that enable us to meet as a Provincial Grand Lodge in Great Hall.

On a happy note I celebrated my 50 years in Freemasonry on December 5th last year in the bosom of Lechmore Volunteer Lodge. Very kindly the Pro Grand Master, the Marquess of Northampton visited us and presented me with my Certificate. It was a most happy and well organised occasion and I would like to pay tribute to my Lodge for giving me a wonderful Christmas Party. I would also like to thank many of you who wrote to me and for the kind thoughts transmitted to me from members of the Province.

I look forward to perhaps seeing you during Freemasonry in the Community week or more certainly at the Cathedral Service on Sunday, July 7th.

Thank you all for your friendships during the past year.

Enjoy your summer, and thank you for listening to me.