

PROVINCIAL GRAND LODGE OF MARK MASTER MASONS OF WARWICKSHIRE

Annual Meeting, Saturday 22nd November 2008

Address by the Provincial Grand Master, RW Bro David JF Rawlins

I would like to commence my address with a series of thank you's. Firstly to my excellent management team – my Deputy, Assistant and the Secretariat, who have kept me on the straight and narrow during my first year. Their help and advice has been invaluable. I must, here, say a special thank you to my Deputy – I have much appreciated his help and support, despite the fact that it has been a very difficult year for him and we wish him well for the coming months.

To W.Brothers Gareth, Mike, and Roger thank you for all your hard work and to W.Bro. Derek Griffin and his D.C. team, thank you for all your hard work, not only throughout the year but especially for this meeting. Its success depends so much on your expertise.

Secondly I thank all those Officers who were appointed last year and have attended the various Mark and Ark Mariner Installation meetings. Their contribution to the success of the past year has been tremendous – and I also thank those lodges who have received us so generously throughout the year.

A special thank you goes to the Provinces, many of whom are represented here today, that I, and my colleagues have attended and have always received a warm welcome and great fellowship.

One of my first duties after my Installation, was the dedication of the Yenton Mark Lodge Banner. There was great support from all the Provincial Officers and a delightful evening was spent among many friends. A further Banner Dedication followed in June, that of the Yenton Royal Ark Mariners. Then, in October, a Provincial visit to Holte Mark Lodge, to celebrate their 250th meeting, was equally well supported and enjoyed.

This year has given me a tremendous amount of pleasure and satisfaction. I have been greatly encouraged by the standard of ritual and here, I must mention our Lodge of Instruction.

Thank you to the Preceptors and Officers who work tirelessly to bring out the best in those brethren who participate in the ceremony at the Lodge of Instruction Festival. This year the District Grand Master of South and East Caribbean, Derek Hugh, was our President. It was a magnificent evening.

At this point I must mention W.Bro. Alan Brook, a stalwart of L.O.I. for many years. Alan is not well at the moment but we hope and pray that he will continue to make the progress he has already achieved.

The LOI team has already begun preparations for next year's Festival and we look forward to the opportunity of seeing the results of their hard work in March, under the Presidency of R.W.Bro. Neville Barker Cryer. We wish them well.

To those Officers I have appointed today, I hope you have a most enjoyable and rewarding year. I can promise you a warm welcome from every Lodge you attend and would ask you to use your time in Office as an opportunity of expanding your knowledge not only of Mark and Ark Mariner Masonry but also of the Warwickshire Province and the various meeting places. And, of course, your support of all the social events, always so popular in Warwickshire, will be much appreciated.

Immediately after my Installation last year, we enjoyed, what has become a wonderful start to the Christmas Season, the Carol Service at Edgbaston Old Church. Alison, the Vicar, has assured us of a warm welcome again this year, on 14th December and I look forward to your company then. Bro. Richard Viney, grandson of the late W.Bro. Victor Brooks, will sing for us – he has a wonderful voice and I'm looking forward to hearing him again.

Following its great success this year, we have arranged another Family Lunch for May - again here at the Clarendon Suites who looked after us so well last time.

At this event, lodges are encouraged to invite the widows of those of their brethren no longer with us. It was a very enjoyable and informal event and I urge you all to attend along with your families.

Our annual trip to the Investiture meeting of Grand Lodge was a great day and we congratulate all those who were invested with Grand Rank, including of course, 2 acting ranks – W.Bro.Gareth Hughes as Junior Deacon and W.Bro. Eric Rymer as Grand Steward. It's wonderful to see them in their chains of office and we congratulate them both.

July saw our brethren, along with family and friends, enjoy Jazz in the Park on what was probable the only Sunday during the summer, when the sun shone. Golf and Cricket events have also proved very popular and will be continued next year.

A new event in the Mark calendar this year was the Bonfire Party, held earlier this month at W.Bro. Cedric Stiles's home and I am delighted to tell you that, thanks to your wonderful support, the magnificent sum of over £3000 was raised for the Warwickshire Mark Benevolent Fund.

Brethren, I must thank our very active Social Committee, under the Chairmanship of W.Bro. Cedric. They all work tirelessly to ensure we enjoy many happy events, most of which are shared with family and friends which is typical, brethren, of the Mark Degree. And of course, we mustn't forget the wives and partners of the Social Committee, who are so supportive behind the scenes, preparing food etc. I hope the committee will pass on our grateful thanks to them.

Brethren, today I have appointed replacements for 4 very hard working stalwart Officers of the Province. W.Bro. Tony Richards will take over from V.W.Bro. Donald Borthwick who has served for many years, as Trustee of the Warwickshire Mark Benevolent Fund;

W.Bro. David Hopkins takes over as Assistant Secretary from W.Bro. Roger Sargent who has held that Office for 7 years and will be a hard act to follow. W.Bro. Victor Keene is our new Provincial Chaplain taking over from W.Bro. Idris Jones who, during his 8 years in Office, has given some wonderful orations at Banner Dedications and Consecrations, not to mention some entertaining forms of Grace and Return of Thanks. And last but not least, W.Bro. Hugh Thompson has been appointed Charity Steward and Secretary of the Warwickshire Mark Benevolent Fund, replacing V.W.Bro. Alec McDowall. V.W.Bro. Alec, we thank you for your dedication and commitment to this Office for the past 17 years. You have worked tirelessly for the benefit of many deserving people and causes and I thank you for agreeing to be a guiding hand to W.Bro. Hugh during the coming months. I will be saying a little more at the Festive Board.

Next month, the Most Worshipful Grand Master will recognise the work that W.Brethren Brian Burnell, Peter Fry, Barry Dolphin and Norman Smallwood have done for the Royal Ark Mariners Degree by conferring on them, RAMGR and we congratulate them all. We hope many brethren of the Province will be there supporting them and enjoying a meal afterwards. Please enquire about train times and details from W.Bro. Gareth, Provincial Secretary.

I hope, brethren, that you have noticed our new Provincial Sword and Stand. The Sword was kindly donated by W.Bro. Peter Viola, our new Standard Bearer. W.Bro. Ken Downs has put his 'mark' on it by attaching a token symbolising the Mark Degree and a Triangle, the symbol of the RAM. The Sword rests upon a stand in the form of an Arch, which was designed and presented by V.W.Bro. Keith Holdsworth. Our sincere thanks to all of them for their generosity.

Now brethren, we must keep up with modern technology so we are launching a new web site today - www.warwickshiremark.org.uk designed by the Provincial WebMaster, Bro. Phil Benson and we thank him for his excellent work.

Also brethren, you will have noticed on your seats, the first issue of the Mark News Letter, for which we thank W.Bro. Peter Wellings and Bro. John Handley who have taken on the responsibility of this publication but its future success, brethren, lies mainly with you and your support by keeping Bros. Peter and John well supplied with items of interest from your lodges, which you can share with us all.

Brethren, these two new ventures are all about communication and the success of the Mark Degree in Warwickshire depends much on communication. I urge you all to communicate your enthusiasm for this Degree to your friends in the Craft who have not yet joined us. Explain the significance and importance of its relationship with the Craft and other Degrees, but most of all let them know how much you enjoy the fellowship and friendships it brings. It really is a great pleasure to see the Provincial Grand Master of the Craft and many of his team at this meeting. We have, on many occasions, stated the importance of our connections with the Craft and, above all, Provincial Grand Master we pledge to you our full support.

Brethren, I mentioned earlier, the sterling work of the Mark Benevolent Fund and the fruits of its labour enable me today, to present the following donations and I would ask the D.C. to bring forward –

R.W.Bro. George Bonham, PGM for Northamptonshire & Huntingshire

V.W.Bro. William Strain, Deputy PGM for North Wales

R.W.Bro. Michael J Price, PGM Warwickshire

Brethren we shall also be sending a substantial donation to Cumberland and Westmorland who are holding their Festival on 12th July next year. W.Bro. Cedric Styles is organising a party to attend the festival and details will be available shortly.

Now, Bro. D.C. would you please bring R.W.Bro. David Hooker to me.

And finally, brethren, I would like to thank our host Lodges, Peace & Unity and Mancetter and all of you for being here today. Let us now enjoy our lunch together and I wish you a safe journey home and look forward to being with you again soon.