

Provincial Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons of Essex
Keystone Province
150th Anniversary Keystone Province
Grand Patron – Mark Benevolent Fund



R.W.Bro. Terence. D. Sheern
Provincial Grand Master

Brethren, today of course should have been our Annual General Meeting at Felsted and I didn't want the date of our meeting to go by without having the opportunity to speak to you all during this unprecedented and strange situation we all find ourselves in. Once the suspension period has been lifted we will be holding some form of truncated AGM as we still have Provincial business to conduct.

I also wanted to give you all an update on what has been happening around the Province and an idea of what's to come, as well as taking the opportunity to congratulate those who are being appointed or promoted from today. This means of course those new ranks and Offices are to be used in any correspondence, Lodge notices etc from today and the recipients will of course be able to wear their new ranks on their regalia when normal business is resumed.

The usual, although shortened, Annual Meeting Booklet is accompanied with this address and I congratulate sincerely those listed who are being appointed or promoted.

Let us also take a moment today to reflect upon those we have lost since our last meeting. May I remind you Brethren, the names included in the booklet are those who have sadly passed away up to the end of May 2020.

Can I say a big thank you from the outset to my Deputy V.W.Bro. Richard Bowyer and two Assistants W.Bro's. Mark Reeve and John Finlay for the help, support, encouragement and advice throughout the year. I am very grateful and the Province couldn't be in the healthy state it is without them

I am very pleased to inform you that we continue to make steady progress in our recruitment and retention and have made increases in both the Mark and Royal Ark Mariner membership numbers for the fifth year in succession. This increase is due to your commitment and enthusiasm for the Order and the hard work in the organisation and running of several successful Mark Awareness evenings by V.W.Bro. Richard Bowyer and W.Bro. John Finlay. When reading the booklet please remember the figures used are for the period ending 31st August 2019. They do not include the members of Fillebrook RAM, Essex Armed Forces or Northern Star as these all came into being after the end of the reporting year (31st August 2019) Whereas the Keystone on Line figures are up to date as of now and more accurately reflect our membership of over 50 more than the booklet. We also have a good number of candidates waiting in the wings to be advanced once we have resumed our meetings.

It is usual for me at this time to make a presentation to the Craft Provincial Grand Master on your behalf to show our continued support for the Craft Province and in particular the 2022 festival. I have on this

occasion sent the donation by post, a total of £9,000.00, £1,000.00 from the Installed Masters Lodge 1044 and £8,000.00 from the Province. Whilst I am sure this adequately reflects our support, the amount has been slightly reduced this year due to the coronavirus effect on donations to the Province.

We continue to donate to Supporting Asperges Families in Essex (SAFE) our long-term support of a local charity as well as Hamilton Court, Provincial MBF festivals and brothers in need. All this is achieved because of your generosity.

You will notice that for the first time we have included the Lodge Honorifics in the booklet so you can see how your donations have contributed towards the MBF awards and our Provincial honours as well.

On other matters the Province held a successful Officers Mess at Frinton this year with over 100 in attendance, which was particularly pleasing for me to see your requirement to move the mess around working so well. The Officers Mess this year will take place at Hutton Banqueting Suite on Friday 27th November all being well.

I can also report the Northern Lodge Cluster meeting held at St Nicholas Lodge in Harwich was also a successful evening and good fun as well. The next Cluster meeting will be hosted by Berrife Lodge at Brightlinsea on either the 1st December 2020 or the 11th May 2021

Last years Golf Day was again a success raising £3,000.00 for the Welfare Fund, as was the annual Crowstone Lodge Chinese meal evening. I thank all those who worked hard behind the scenes and during the events to make them so successful. Whilst we have a Golf day planned again this year it is not clear as yet whether it will take place, we will of course keep you informed.

The Provincial Bonus ball and regalia sales continue to bring much needed funds into the Welfare Fund and I thank you for supporting them and please continue to do so.

Whilst on the subject of Charity can I remind you that we will be holding the annual MBF Festival in 2030. I know that sounds a long way off but the better prepared we are the more chance we have of raising money. For example the Province of Surrey, which is a smaller Province than ours, raised £1.3m last year. During the years prior to the Festival there will of course be numerous fund raising events, however to reduce the burden of those who will be involved and as part of our legacy for those in the future, can I urge you all please to consider donating now. If every member donated £10 a month from now until then, the Province would have raised £1m. Please complete the attached regular giving form. Please ensure you ask for payments to be accredited to the 2030 festival (See the bold type 2/3rds of the way down on page 1) and send to Mark Masons Hall.

Once again I have had absolutely first class support from the Active Officers of the year who accompanied me in large numbers on my visits around the Province. It has often been said their presence adds so much to the meetings they attend, so thank you all once again.

I look forward to being joined this year with the newly appointed Active Officers on my visits.

I am delighted to inform you The Grand Master has been pleased to make the following Promotions or appointments

Promotions

W.Bro. Mark Reeve to Past Grand Junior Overseer

W.Bro. John Helliard to Past Grand Junior Overseer

W.Bro. John Simons to Past Grand Chaplain

All three will be entitled to the title of Very Worshipful Brother

First Appointments

W.Bro. Don (Chris) Smith to Past Grand Junior Deacon

W.Bro. Chris Hicks to Assistant Grand Director of Ceremonies (Active Office)

W.Bro. Nick Franklin to Past Assistant Grand Director of Ceremonies

W.Bro. Bill Fraser BEM to Past Grand Standard Bearer

W.Bro. Peter Hall to Past Assistant Grand Standard Bearer

W.Bro. Peter Steele to Grand Steward (Active Office)

I am sure you will join with me and congratulate them all.

I had the honour and privilege to consecrate two new Lodges this past year, the Northern Star Saturday Morning Breakfast Lodge 2012 and the Essex Armed Forces Lodge 2016. Both occasions were such a delight with lots of good humour and fun. I will remember both occasions with very fond memories, as will I hope, all those who attended and/or took part. The last Mark Lodge Consecration in the Province took place 20 years ago this year.

I was pleased to be able to reponer Fillebrook RAM Lodge 944 as the DC's and Ceremonial Support Lodge. With the consecration and reponing of Fillebrook the Province now has more Lodges than anytime in its history!

I was also privileged to dedicate a new Lodge Banner for Wayfarers Lodge and was meant to dedicate the new Combined Stewards Lodge banner, but the suspension means it will now be done at some future date. I look forward to both these new banners being displayed at our next meeting at Felsted.

You will of course all heard about our Sunday lunch meals on wheels service. This came about via a bid I made to the Mark Benevolent Fund for funding to provide our vulnerable members, their partners, and widows with a two-course lunch from three of the smaller masonic centres in the Province. I decided on this strategy to help the caterers at those centres to receive some income during the suspension period.

The MBF has subsequently agreed some additional funding, (which is being supported via your donations to the Welfare Fund), allowing us to provide lunches to residents of Hamilton Court, the Masonic Warden controlled accommodation. The scheme has been and continues to be a great success not only in the provision of the lunches but because of the magnificent support we have received from volunteers making the deliveries, many of whom are not (yet) Mark men.

I believe the Province has made many new friends and as a consequence raised its profile in our endeavours to support and serve the wider community. I thank all those involved for their continued support.

Whilst it is still unclear when our meetings will resume please be assured that when that decision is made, clear instructions will be given on how to proceed be it a normal meeting, election of Master or Commander and their Installation etc. There are of course many scenarios for individual Lodges and I am confident the advice given will cover all of them.

Brethren you may recall that I have said during my term as Provincial Grand Master it was my intention to give others the opportunity to experience high office and to that end I have made a number of new appointments over the past 5 years. It is my intention to continue this now, V.W.Bro. Richard Bowyer has been a member of this Mark Province for over 33 years and in that time has held most Lodge Offices and in particular Secretary and Treasurer. He has also been an Active Officer in the Province for the past 14 years. He was appointed Provincial Deputy Grand Secretary in 2006, Provincial Grand Secretary in 2010 and Deputy Provincial Grand Master in 2015. During these 14 years I have worked closely with him and we have become good friends. V.W.Bro. Richard's commitment to the Province is second to none and he has been and will continue to be a very valuable asset and one who I am sure will

continue to help and support us all. When you look back over some of his accomplishments you realise there have been many and too many to mention them all here. Most of the behind the scenes admin procedures were developed, introduced or refined by Richard, the Mark awareness evenings were designed and delivered by him, his knowledge of the Provincial accounts and their working has been vital to name but a few. I have however asked Richard to stand down as my Deputy to allow others to step up. I know Richard was disappointed with my decision but gracefully accepted it. And so I would like to place on record my deepest thanks for all he has done not only for you and the Province but also in his support of me. I do really hope this support will continue.

Because of the retirement of V.W.Bro Richard it is my intention to appoint W.Bro. John Finlay as my Deputy. As you know W.Bro. John has served as Provincial Deputy DC, Provincial DC and as an Assistant Provincial Grand Master. I am confident John has acquired the knowledge and has the skills to follow in V.W.Bro. Richard's footsteps. It is also my intention to appoint W.Bro. Richard Goodwin to an Assistant Provincial Grand Master. W.Bro. Richard is another one of those who works tirelessly behind the scenes on behalf of the Province in so many ways, for example, quiz nights, charity auctions, golf day, bonus ball, managing the media team etc and has in my view without doubt earned this promotion. I am confident he will serve you and the Province well and be an asset to the team.

These appointments will take effect from the 10th September 2020 the date of the next Installed Masters 1044 meeting. If the meeting takes place their Installation will be conducted in the normal manner. If meetings are still suspended they will take up their Office on that date as their Patent of Appointment will have been produced and in effect.

I hope Brethren you approve of these appointments and will give your support to them.

Lastly Brethren may I take this opportunity to give a special thank you to our Provincial Almoner W.Bro. Roy Kaye for his continued hard work on behalf of us all. I don't think he has spent a day not on the phone or on emails. Because of his hard work our Sunday lunches have reached many who may not have been included or aware of the scheme. His commitment to keeping in touch with you during this difficult period has been an inspiration to us all. I would also like to thank W.Bro. Roy's two helpers W.Bro. Mike Levene and W.Bro. Geoff Newman as well as all the Lodge Almoners and other Lodge members who took it upon themselves to stay in touch and update us on their Lodges and Lodge members. I can honestly say I think once again we have proved ourselves to be members of the friendly degree and long may it continue.

I do hope to see you and be with you all in the not to distant future

Thank you