

Address to Provincial Grand Chapter 26 March 2009

Companions.

What a tremendous nine months for all of us. So much has been completed in so short a time scale and my sincere thanks go out to all of you.

At my Installation, from the moment that I entered the Chapter, to the end of the evening, I felt very humble, yet uplifted from the immense feeling of true Companionship and unanimity all of one accord, to cherish and support each other and to be a part of our very successful Royal Arch life together.

My entry into the Chapter was a moment long to be remembered and certainly one I will never forget. I very much appreciated the superb support given then and the subsequent support that you have given to the Province, to your Chapters and to me, since that happy day.

My theme was then and will continue to be, one of consolidation of the relevant initiatives and focuses, together in due time, when appropriate, moving into new activities. Thus the main theme from that meeting and now is tender loving care; TLC in short. My 'Executive' teams and I have had a period of bonding together, with much success. We have now consolidated and moved forward. The Executive is now much stronger, with a clearer vision of the future of our Province coupled with commitment and drive moving in the same direction, with great enthusiasm.

We have, today, seen the completion of successful periods of senior office by a number of Companions. To all these, I give both the grateful thanks of the Province, together with my own.

We welcome Companion Norman Clark as Companion David Thompson's successor.

Companion Thompson is moving his considerable talents from the Office of the Assistant to the Provincial Grand Principals for the Central Area No 1, to his new and very substantive position as the Chairman of the 2015 Festival.

Companions, time moves on and another Festival Appeal - this time for the RMBI, approaches in the near future. It is my intention to launch that Appeal at the next Annual Meeting of Provincial Grand Lodge in November. Companion Thompson now has a number of months to work behind the scenes, laying his schemes and planning the next major event within the Province. Various committees will be formed, appointments made and essential paraphernalia purchased in sufficient time for the formal announcement of the Festival. I do hope that you will extend to Companion Thompson every assistance and encouragement in the task that lies ahead. Having learnt our lessons from the last Festival in 2004, we need to ensure that we "hit the ground running" at the launch on 19 November 2009.

Companions, you as individuals will have to decide how your various contributions can be afforded. Perhaps I can ask you to consider that the ELMC needs us to continue our essential support? Our care structure is still of the highest Order and thanks are due to you all for the financial support you give, and for the dedicated assistance given by the support staff.

The Chairman and the Board of ELMC have agreed funding for Community Projects throughout the next five years (though clearly and sensibly at a reduced level) commencing in November so that we may concentrate on the RMBI Appeal.

Companion Peter Messum has agreed to vacate his position as the Assistant to the Provincial Grand Principals for the Central Area No 2. His successor is Companion Ed Cheadle, whom we will hear more from later at the Festive Board.

I am most grateful to Comp Peter Messum for relinquishing the position one year early in order to accept the position of Chairman of the very important and influential Education and Development Committee. His skills have already been put to the test, as his Committee was extremely successful in the organisation and involvement in the “Let’s talk Masonry” Conference held at Hemsley House, Salford two weeks ago.

The Conference was successful beyond all our expectations and was attended by well over 100 Masons, all of whom gave very positive feedback. Most came away with a different outlook and perception of our ritual. The majority, even after many years of membership, felt that they had learned and suddenly understood aspects of ceremony / ritual which previously had been too daunting to explore further. I have every confidence that they will certainly be stimulated to further exertions and hopefully carry their understanding back to their Lodges and Chapters.

This is just one new and successful initiative that I have encouraged to further the work of the Province's Mentoring Initiative. The members of this very important Committee have already spent extensive time, debate and energy in listening to the Brethren in the Craft and to the Companions in the Royal Arch with a view to the needs and the improvement of, the knowledge of all our members. The Committee has given tremendous support to our new Provincial Grand Mentor (Designate) Companion Martin Roche in his quest to provide appropriate Masonic experiences for our members. One of our aims must be to relieve the feeling of listlessness and dissatisfaction resulting from lack of interest in the work within both Chapters and Lodges and to work towards ensuring that all of us understand our ritual.

This includes the reason why we do certain things and, more importantly, to provide the facility to impart that knowledge to our newer Companion, in a timely manner and before they progress on to the next level.

This approach may be seismic jump for some, but not all Chapters and fits in most appropriately with our quest to be able to “spread a little TLC”.

Tender loving Care can take many forms: the love for one’s family - the love of the Almoner caring for the bereft widow - the brotherly love of the Mentor or DC, taking time to advise the new Mason, for example, on the reason for the perambulation, or the passage of Ritual he has been asked to learn - the love of the brethren building for the local community good cause, or the giving of money to support our brethren in time of need.

These are all aspects of brotherly love, but each requires overcoming apathy, expending energy, giving of ourselves and taking the time to truly nurture another – both for the benefit of theirs and our own spiritual growth. Freemasonry within East Lancashire should encompass all of these.

At the end of the month, in order to cement the Mentoring aspects of the Royal Arch and the Craft together, Companion Roche will be appointed and invested in the 3747, Craft Provincial Grand Officer's Lodge, as the Provincial Grand Mentor. He will oversee the introduction and implementation of the mentoring scheme in the Craft and likewise in the Royal Arch, as and when the Supreme Grand Chapter authorise the appointment.

Assisting in this great design will be Companion Kai Hughes who will also in like manner, be appointed and invested, as the Craft Provincial Grand Orator and similarly in the Royal Arch when Supreme Grand Chapter so authorise.

In both these important tasks, I do not wish the Royal Arch to be devoid of the considerable skills of both these worthy Companions: I see them, immediately, assisting the Royal Arch.

Companions, many of you will already be aware of the skills contained within the Communication Committee and have seen the results of the dedicated Chairman, Companion Chad Northcott. The Committee is beavering away and assisting all areas of the Province from the web site to the recent conference on ritual.

Communication and recruitment is taken very seriously and we are moving successfully into the modern world of communication. Many young men out there are disenchanted with the roller-coasting negativity of many aspects of modern society, are seeking for stability and meaning to life. The best communicators of the positive story of Freemasonry are you, the Brethren and Companions of East Lancashire. Recruitment and retention continue to be so important; our future is in all our hands.

Companions, now moving on, we have, today, 154 Companions, some who will be experiencing their first Appointment, others the elation of Promotion and not forgetting the long-standing and faithful re-appointments. I do thank all of you for the work that you have undertaken and, of course, in anticipation of what you will do in the future. Your Chapters will know that the rank to which you have been appointed reflects not only what you have achieved in your own Chapter but also in many cases, the work you do within the Districts of the Province and in the community.

In addition to the Provincial Grand ranks, I am very happy to announce that the following Companions have received notification from Supreme Grand Chapter that they are to receive Grand Rank at the Supreme Grand Chapter Annual Investiture in April 2009.

Promotions

Allan Bennion to PGSwdB

Christopher Bolton to PAGSoj

and

First Appointment to Past Grand Standard Bearer

Norman Clarke

Philip Conn

Ivan Eastwood

Alexander McLaren

Finally, Companions, as you all know, events such as today do not just happen.

To bring the whole event together, we have relied on the support staff here at King George's Hall, the Hall Stewards, the Security Stewards and our "Bridge Street" Ladies; far too many to mention individually.

What a wonderful job they all do for us.

Perhaps I can, though, include everyone by mentioning two teams in particular, those of the Provincial Grand Scribe E and those of the Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies.

To all of you who have been involved in any way, my very grateful thanks.

To conclude, I just wish to say,

- well done to each and everyone for the contribution that you are making to your Chapter,
- well done to those receiving an Honour,
- well done for the tremendous support that you are giving to the Province,
- well done for using your very precious time by being present with us this afternoon and
- my heartfelt and sincere thanks for the continued support that you give to Dorothy and to me.

God Bless You All.