

Brethren,

It is a great delight to see so many of you here, especially those newer and younger brethren who are attending for the first time, and I trust that you have enjoyed today's proceedings.

Today, we say goodbye to all those Provincial Officers who have completed their time in office. I thank them all for their support and I'm sure they have enjoyed their year especially the Provincial Visits to the Burnett Lodge, the Royal Sussex Lodge of Hospitality, Chatterton Lodge and St. Katharine Lodge, which were very happy occasions.

My thanks are particularly due to the retiring Wardens, W. Brother Tony Baker and W. Brother Steve Rawlings, who have shown great dedication in visiting all the lodges regularly and representing the Province exceedingly well. They have formed what has become a formidable partnership. I know they have enjoyed the past year and they will be a hard act to follow.

I also thank W. Brother Mike Oates on the efficient way he has carried out the duties of Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies over the past 2 years - more of him in a moment.

I congratulate all those brethren whom I have appointed to Provincial rank or promoted in Provincial Grand Lodge today. It is always a pleasure to reward those who have richly deserved their honours. Please appreciate that Provincial Rank is never a right ; it recognises past service but, at the same time, demands more commitment in future. Brethren, you must continue to promote the Craft. Assist newer brethren to appreciate and enjoy their membership and, in conjunction with mentors, provide them with instruction and knowledge so that their appreciation can be enhanced. The two new Wardens I have appointed, W. Brothers Mike Oates and Stephen Stafford are well known to many of you and I'm sure you will enjoy their company. You will be seeing plenty of them. You will also have noticed that I have endorsed the appointment of W. Brother Philip Bolwell of Brunel Lodge as the new Librarian and Archivist to the Province and given him the rank of Past Provincial Junior Grand Deacon. Philip has already made a great impact on the library and is ready and willing to assist any brother with research. He has also been assisting W. Brother Bob Whalley with the Historic Record Survey for Grand Lodge.

W. Brother Chris Williams continues in the office of Provincial Grand Orator and has been very active over the past year. I repeat what I have said previously that I would prefer lodges to invite Chris to deliver one or more of the accepted orations instead of carrying out demonstrations. This can be so much more productive and interesting, especially to newer members. Use him - he is both willing and able ! I appreciate, however, that, where parties of visitors come to Bristol to see our working, they should not be disappointed but, with careful planning, a balance can be obtained. Chris will continue to act as Education Officer and monitor mentoring arrangements throughout all lodges but, as this tripartite role is becoming increasingly onerous, I shall be discussing with him during the coming year how we can relieve him of some of these duties which will offer an interesting opportunity for another experienced brother. At the Annual Investiture of Grand Lodge last week, the Grand Master appointed and invested W. Brothers Dr. Richard Hayes and Richard Heath (known to us all as 'Max') as Past Assistant Grand Directors of ceremonies. I'm sure we all congratulate them on their well-deserved honours !

The year 2008/9 has provided many special and very happy occasions : In May last year, Beaufort Lodge, reinforced by numerous other Bristol brethren, visited the U.S.A. and

demonstrated the 1<sup>st</sup> Degree at No. 1 Lodge, New York. This was a very happy an outstanding trip and is to be repeated in 2010. Contact W. Brother Philip Harrill of Beaufort Lodge if you would like to join them.

In September 2008, I was delighted to consecrate the Sportsmen's Lodge as the 36<sup>th</sup> lodge in the Province. V.W. Brother Alan Vaughan was installed as the first Worshipful Master and reacquainted himself with all the customs and practices of the "Corner"; In October, I dedicated a new Master's Collar and Jewel presented to the Francis Rawdon Lodge by W. Brother Roger Howell to celebrate their 60<sup>th</sup> year; The Christmas Fair and Open Day at the end of November, organised and run by Mrs. Jan Collins and the Ladies of the 1996 Circle, was an incredible success and raised £8000 for the Wallace & Gromit Appeal for sick children and babies plus other charities. I am delighted they are organising the 2009 Fair which takes place on Saturday, 28<sup>th</sup> November.

In January this year, the 'rebranded' Bristol Masonic Charities was launched at a Gourmet Dinner where 90 members enjoyed an excellent evening. Entertainment was provided By W. Brother Philip Serrell, the well-known auctioneer, author and T.V. personality from Malvern. Finally, in March, a coachload of brethren attended the installation of our new Pro Grand Master and Deputy Grand Master by the Most Worshipful Grand Master, HRH The Duke of Kent - that was a very special occasion. Our "Bristol Ritual" continues to be demonstrated in various parts of the country and, now, as you have heard overseas. At the end of March, it was a particular pleasure for the Provincial Grand Secretary and myself to accompany St. Nicholas Lodge when they demonstrated the First Degree to the Warwickshire Installed Masters' Lodge at Edgbaston in Birmingham - over 300 brethren were in attendance on that day and St. Nicholas Lodge excelled in delivering our ritual to a very high standard. Such demonstrations always evince enthusiastic letters from the lodges visited, praising the content, dignity and expertise displayed. I congratulate all those who have participated and will continue to send lodges far and wide as requests come into the Provincial Office.

Following the great success of our 2008 Festival in aid of the RMBI, we now move into an 11-year cycle before the next Festival in 2019 which will be in aid of the Masonic Samaritan Fund. I was anxious that the momentum of giving generated by the Festival should not be dissipated. With that in mind and with the aim of making greater grants to local charities, the trustees of the B.M.C.T. reviewed their powers under the Trust Deed and decided that the best way forward was to depart from their objective of providing a home for elderly masons and their dependants - which was no longer a viable proposition - and instead concentrate on allocating the interest on the capital to local charities. 4 new trustees have been appointed making 9 in all and they will meet once the accounts of the 'Charity' have been prepared up to 30<sup>th</sup> June each year to decide who should benefit from those funds. Their decisions will be announced at the Finance & General Purposes Meeting in September. As you may have heard, it was also the trustees wish to change the name to "Bristol Masonic Charities". Brethren, I hope you appreciate this progressive step and will support this Charity. Also, I have established the P.G.M.'s Discretionary Fund. This will be a permanent fund with the flexibility for the P.G.M., through the Provincial Executive, to make donations to assist individuals and good causes other than registered charities. I look forward to the support of all lodges to enable Freemasonry in Bristol to show our local community, in a tangible way, that we care about it and the individuals living within it.

The Communications Committee has continued to meet under the Chairmanship of the D.P.G.M. and the Website continues to be updated by W. Brother John Brooks.

I am glad to confirm that we are now linked to the Grand Lodge Adelphi System which is

proving to be of great benefit to the Province. One or two matters are still to be resolved but this has been a great step forward in communication and I thank W. Brothers Ian Satherley and Fred Parsons for their efforts in this matter.

Brethren, over the past 5 years, you have received 10 Issues of “The Bristol Standard”, our Provincial newsletter. Under the editorial expertise of W. Brother Bob Weeks, this newsletter was created, adapted and shaped into a newsy and informative publication. I record my grateful thanks to him for all the hard work and commitment he put into this venture. As you have heard, W. Brother Tony Whitmarsh has succeeded Bob as Editor and we eagerly await his first issue. No doubt, there will be changes of emphasis. One already evident is that future issues will appear in June and January. I wish Tony and his team every success in this project. Remember, Brethren, that articles or news items are always welcome.

Brethren, 2010 is only 1 year away and I continue to be concerned that progress has slowed on the project to compile a history of Masonry in Bristol from 1910-2010. The timescale for production of this volume will now be later than that originally planned but I would urge all lodge “historians” to keep the momentum going in order to assist W. Brother Bob Baggs in managing this extensive enterprise. Brethren, at this time last year, I recommended that all lodges appoint a Royal Arch representative. I am pleased to report that, apart from a handful of lodges, all others have adopted this recommendation. This has already had a beneficial effect and I am hopeful that membership of the Royal Arch will continue to increase.

Sadly, Brethren, from time to time, Freemasons’ Hall experiences the collapse through illness of a brother. I am delighted to inform you, therefore, that St. Nicholas Lodge has purchased and presented to the Province a defibrillator which has been installed near the foyer. Some 20 brethren have volunteered to be trained in its use by W. Brother Colin Lias of Temple Lodge. Let’s hope that this equipment will not be required frequently but I thank St. Nicholas Lodge for this generous gesture.

I am indebted to the senior members of the Province for all their dedication and support over the past year and I am particularly grateful to the Provincial Grand Secretary and his team and the Provincial Grand Treasurer for ensuring that the Province continues to run smoothly. I also thank the Provincial Grand Directors of Ceremonies and their Deputies for orchestrating today’s ceremony as well as the Provincial Visits during the year. I also thank W. Brother Paul Corder for today’s music. My further thanks are due to W. Brothers Keith Downes, Philip Patrick and members of the Moira Lodge of Honour, Colston Lodge and Jerusalem Lodge who prepared this Hall for today’s meeting. I also express my sincere thanks to the Bristol Grammar School for its continued co-operation in allowing us to use this delightful venue. Brethren, thank you for your friendship and support over the past 12 months. My Deputy and I will carry on with our aim to visit every lodge during the coming year and we will look forward to seeing you at those meetings.

Freemasonry Today’ continues to publish the illuminating thoughts of that great mason, RW Bro. The Rev. Canon Richard Tydeman, and I should like to finish with one of them :“...it is up to us to demonstrate to the world the value of our personal membership of the Craft. I am never tired of repeating that the world will judge us by what they see in us and not just by what we see in each other. We have to live our Masonry in such a way that people will know they can rely on us for love, relief and truth at all times.”