

# Provincial Grand Master's address to Provincial Grand Lodge 2019

May I offer you all a warm welcome once again to the Winter Gardens and to this our Annual Provincial Meeting and I thank you for visiting my lodge today. I am pleased to say that our Province continues to prosper, and the indications are that we have finally reversed the trend of the having more join us than leave. Whilst the difference is not, at the moment substantial, nevertheless, this reversal of fortune is welcome news to all of us, for whom this organisation means so much. Long may it continue.

We have just heard from Paul Crockett regarding the MCF and I do hope that you all thoroughly appreciate the work it does to improve the quality of life for so many.

You are all aware that our short four-year Festival is now half way through and on behalf of us all I would like to thank Phil Preston and his team for all the hard work they have put in to encourage your support. Your patronage is invaluable, not just today, but for your continued support of our Festival.

I would also ask that, whenever possible, you use the white envelope Gift Aid Scheme, as it attracts 25% back to the charity, if you are a tax payer. It should also be remembered that it contributes towards the various levels of personal patronage. I would ask you all to continue your support of the Festival by whatever means, so that when the times comes West Lancashire can be seen, once again, to be at the forefront of Masonic giving.

Our major fund-raising event is the 'Night with the Stars' here at the Winter Gardens this coming Saturday evening, I do hope that you will be able to be with us for what I am sure will be a most spectacular evening. We need your support and it is still not too late to book your seats.

Brethren I am sure that you have all heard of the 'Wisdom of Solomon', well that wisdom and knowledge has been recreated as an online resource facility aimed at developing our further understanding of Freemasonry in both the Craft and the Royal Arch.

This is a timely moment for me to thank our Provincial Grand Mentor, Stewart Cranage for all the work he has done, in fact, I have a sneaky feeling that quite a lot of what appears on 'Solomon' has had the hand of Stewart on it. The presentations and the amount of work Stewart has done, has been quite extraordinary, so if you do get the chance to attend one of his presentations, I would urge you to do so. You could very well find yourself making a year's worth of daily advancements in one go.

Turning now to the Holy Royal Arch. For those who have yet to take that additional step, I would urge you to do so. It is enjoyable, vibrant and stimulating. The work of the Royal Arch Executive, led by my Deputy Grand Superintendent, has made significant progress and I am delighted to report that membership in this Province has increased, to a point where 44% of our brethren are also members of the Royal Arch.

West Lancashire has many excellent centres of Freemasonry and they are very important to our future and once again we are holding a seminar for those managing the centres on 28 October.

I now wish to refer to our presence in the community, I am sure that, like me, you have a great sense of belonging to an organisation that is caring not only for its own members, but for the

various communities in which we live and work. The work and assistance we provide in our Communities is vital in increasing our profile as an organisation and that that work does not go unnoticed. If you are doing work in your communities, it is important that we know about it.

For example:

- Brethren in the Furness and South Lakeland Group are volunteers for the inshore lifeboat.
- Brethren in Liverpool who carry out volunteer work in various charities.
- The brother from the South Eastern Group, who helps the homeless of Manchester, by supplying hot food to late in the night.

These are but three examples and there are many, many more. Please keep us informed.

Looking inwards, there are many brethren, all around the Province, who work tirelessly for Freemasonry. The group officers, almoners, care officers, communications, publicity and website teams, membership and mentoring officers, charity stewards, together with those grand officers who represent me at lodge installation meetings. I very much appreciate all the invaluable work that you undertake, we honestly couldn't function without you. Thank you and to the publicity team who work so hard to process the articles for the website, thank you all.

Today we have been in the very capable hands, of the South Fylde Group of Lodges and my thanks go to their past group chairman Ian Ward and their new group chairman John Robbie Porter and the captain of stewards, John Topping, together with the brethren of the group for the stewardship they have provided to ensure the security and our safety, as well as the general smooth running of today's meeting.

I would like to express my appreciation to both the outgoing Provincial GDC's Keith Kemp and his successor Malcolm Bell, together with the deputies, for the management of the ceremonial which, once again has been first class and a credit to West Lancashire. I also thank our Provincial Organist, Stephen Derringer and the Deputy Organist Roy James for the musical arrangements during this meeting.

A very special thank you to the Provincial Grand Secretary Peter and his team, Andrew, Diana and Violet together with the many volunteers, for the enormous amount of work involved in the administration and arrangements for this meeting, and for the work carried out during the year. Peter, you and all your staff are to be congratulated on all that you do, and we hope all goes well with the Provincial Office move tomorrow.

It has been a great honour and a privilege for me to have been able to congratulate individually those brethren who have today received an appointment to, or a promotion in, Provincial Grand Lodge. My heartiest congratulations and I ask you to continue supporting the Province, your group and your lodges. We all look forward to seeing you enjoying your new rank for many years to come.

It means a great deal to me to see so many of you here enjoying yourselves, because after all, that is what our Freemasonry is about. I thank you for supporting your own lodges and chapters as much as you do and for supporting my lodge today. I look forward to an opportunity to come to yours when I possibly can. Please continue to enjoy your Freemasonry. God bless you all.