

REPORT OF THE PROVINCIAL GRAND SECRETARY – 24th APRIL 2018

R. W. Provincial Grand Master and Brethren,

I must start my report by once again expressing my sincere thanks to all the Lodge Secretaries and Scribes for their continued assistance and co-operation in ensuring that this large Province is administered efficiently.

I also wish to put on record my thanks to my Deputy, W.Bro. Colin Mills, the Assistant secretaries, W.Bros. John Waring and Geoffrey Catterall as well as W.Bro. Derek Easton all of whom have been a great help in managing the copious amounts of information which passes through the office on a daily basis!

I must particularly mention the support and assistance of Geoffrey Catterall who is standing down today after being in the Secretariat for the last 4 years.

Turning to the statistics of the Province, we still have 61 Mark Lodges and 24 Royal Ark Mariner Lodges in the Province.

In the period from 1st May 2017 to 31st March 2018 there have been 51 Advancements in Mark Lodges and 20 RAM Elevations. The number of RAM Elevations is disappointingly down on the figure for last year even taking into account that the figures this year only cover an 11 month period.

One success during the year has been the change in the fortunes of Walton Mark Lodge No. 161 which was in danger of closing due to falling membership. The Provincial Grand Master was determined that a Lodge Consecrated in 1872 should not be lost and I am pleased to say that, thanks to the efforts of the members of Walton Lodge and also V.W.Bro. Rod Bennison, the Lodge has been transformed by becoming an Installed Masters Lodge which receives reduced Annual Grand Lodge fees, for all those who have been acting Provincial Grand Stewards. The result is that the membership has been boosted by the addition of 21 Joining members and I encourage all those who are to be appointed today as Provincial Stewards to join this rejuvenated Lodge.

Sadly, we suffered 66 resignations from our Order during the period, once again mainly due to failing health and for personal reasons and regrettably 4 members were Excluded for arrears of subscriptions in accordance with Lodge By-Laws. Significantly no members had their membership Ceased for being in arrears for 2 years which is encouraging as Lodges have heeded my suggestion that By Laws should be amended to permit Exclusion before the 31st August each year to avoid the Lodge having to pay a further Annual Fee which is a significant drain on Lodge funds.

Whilst mentioning Lodge By Laws, the newly appointed Grand Secretary, who addressed this meeting last year, has requested that all Provinces encourage their Lodges to review their own By Laws to bring them in line with a newly published "Model" issued by Grand Lodge and I am pleased to say that many Lodges have taken this on board and I encourage all other Lodges to do the same. This is an ideal opportunity to adjust the period of arrears before Exclusion to avoid unnecessary Annual Dues having to be funded by the Lodge members.

Sadly, as we have heard, we lost 23 of our Brethren.

The overall result is that the current total membership of our Mark Lodges now stands at 1916 compared to 1868 last year – an increase of some 2.7%

Brethren, it is important that we all continue our efforts to increase our membership in both Degrees but we must not forget to support the Craft in attracting new members when we are able as these are our members of the future.

May I remind all Lodge Secretaries and Scribes that the 2018/19 Provincial Mark year book is now available and, if they have not already done so, they should collect their free copy from the Help Desk today and please **do not go home** without one.

Extra copies have been printed and can be purchased from the Help Desk for £3.00.

Although we make every effort to ensure that the Year Book is up to date we are only able to update the individual Lodge entries upon receipt of the Provincial Installation Return.

I thank those Lodge secretaries who submit these promptly following the Installation meeting but I regret to have to say that some secretaries are very slow in submitting them and I appeal to them to send them in as soon as possible following the Installation meeting.

The delayed submission of the Annual Returns for both Grand and Provincial Lodge continues to be a problem with many Lodges not having submitted them by the 31st December despite being required to submit them by the 31st October and I repeat my plea of last year by asking all Lodge Secretaries and Scribes as well as the Lodge Treasurers to ensure that these are dealt with promptly when you are advised by my office that they are available - usually by the 31st August and should be settled by the 31st October.

Speaking of Grand Lodge, the Province has again been recognised by Grand Lodge and a number of our Brethren will receive appointments or promotions in London on Tuesday the 12th June.

THREE of our Brethren will be honoured with Acting Grand Rank: -

W.Bro. David Rotheram is to be appointed as **Grand Senior Deacon**

And W.Bros. Graham Corday and Austin Fletcher are to be appointed as **Grand Stewards**.

In addition, Revd. Bruce Harry, a member of Lebanon Mark Lodge, is to be re-appointed as **Grand Chaplain**.

THIRTEEN other Brethren will receive either first appointments or promotions namely:-

W.Bros. Gareth Jones and Eric Picton are to receive promotion to the Rank of **Past Grand Senior Deacon**.

W.Bro. Graham Bailey, one of the Provincial Grand Master's Special representatives, and W.Bros. Mel Cross, Henry Mayor, Jimmy Rogers and John Waring are to be promoted to the Rank of **Past Grand Junior Deacon**.

The following brethren are to receive first appointment:-

W. Bros. Tony Cross and Andrew Whittle to the rank of **Past Assistant Grand Director of Ceremonies**

W.Bro. Derek Easton, who has assisted me for a number of years in the Secretariat, will be appointed to the rank of **Past Assistant Grand Sword Bearer**

W.Bros. John (Jack) Michael Parker and Graham Sinden will be appointed to the rank of **Past Grand Standard Bearer**

and W.Bro. Edward Thomas Price will be appointed to the rank of **Past Assistant Grand Standard Bearer**.

On behalf of the Province, I congratulate them all and hope that they will enjoy their well deserved ranks and I am sure that you would like to express your congratulations.

Finally, may I remind all brethren that the Provincial website continues to be regularly updated by the Webmaster, W.Bro. Mike Beesley whom I thank sincerely for his dedication and speedy response, but he does require you to submit articles on the activities of your Lodges, whether it be on Lodge meetings or social events, to maintain interest.

Brethren, I am grateful for your attention to my report and I wish you all a very successful year in your Lodges.

Mark Well

John Bicknell P.G.J.D.

Provincial Grand Secretary