

PGM's ADDRESS 18th APRIL 2020

Well Brethren, today I should have been delivering an address to you at the Mark Provincial Meeting. Always an excellent occasion which many Mark Masons in the Province look forward to and enjoy.

Unfortunately, for reasons we are all aware of, that is not possible this year, so I have decided instead to post this 'Virtual Address' on the Provincial web site on the day the meeting should have taken place. I do hope that as you read it you are keeping safe and well and that you find it useful and informative.

I would have begun my Address by welcoming our Distinguished Guests, so instead let me start today by thanking the Heads of all the Masonic Orders in the Province who have come together so magnificently to lead us through these difficult times.

A joint approach with the Craft, the Royal Arch and all other Orders has enabled us to give you guidance and information without overpowering everyone with conflicting messages from many different sources. The joint Suspension Planning Group has done a marvellous job in co-ordinating those messages into a Weekly Bulletin and I thank Alan Oldfield and Fraser McPherson for the roles they are playing on that team.

Our usual Guests from other Provinces are, of course, absent today, but I assure you that I am still in touch with all the other Mark PGMs regularly by a weekly video link.

The outgoing Provincial Team had a very busy year, with Escorted Visits to Morley 1905, Castle 1257, Knaresborough Castle 768, Wharfedale 1027 and Integrity 110 Mark Lodges. Halifax 706 celebrated its Centenary and Lodge Banners were dedicated for Pudsey 658 and Hipperholme R.A.M. 715.

I thank the Provincial Officers of the Year for their magnificent support and only regret that I can't be with them to thank them all personally today.

Five Brethren also celebrated 50 years in our Orders during the year, Alan Hopwood of Prince Leopold 352, John Pringle of Legiolium 457, Brian Batty of Brighouse 753, Derrik Roberts of Gilkirke 812 and Sam Kilburn of Fearnley R.A.M. 58. My congratulations go to them all.

We also enjoyed a full Social program, despite the planned Christmas Ball being cancelled due to boiler failure at the Hotel and I thank Mick Ricketts and the Social Committee for all their hard work. Also John Whitworth and John Fitzpatrick for their Musical Evenings.

This year was going to be even busier than last before the current Masonic suspension was enforced. Many events scheduled to take place in the Spring and Summer have had to be postponed or cancelled, with those in the Autumn also in some doubt. Amongst the events most immediately affected are the

Consecration of our new Mark Provincial Grand Stewards Lodge No 2018, Integrity 110 celebrating 150 years and Lightcliffe 715 Centenary.

The new Provincial Team all assume their new ranks from today and I congratulate them on their appointments. Unfortunately I am unable to Invest them personally on this occasion and the early part of their year will be lost due to the suspension. But it's going to be a very busy Autumn and Winter period for them as we try to catch up on postponed special events and Installations.

A full list of new Provincial Appointments appears separately on this web site, but I would like to comment on a few of the changes here.

W.Bro. John Vause steps down today as our Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies, after 6 years in that role. John has done a tremendous job for the Province as well as for Grand Lodge, where he was Deputy Grand D.C. for 3 years. The latter has earned him a richly deserved promotion to P.G.J.O. and I congratulate John on becoming a Very Worshipful Brother. Andy Brown takes over from John as Provincial Grand D.C. today, with Mark Holland taking over as his Deputy.

Two of our Assistant Provincial Grand D.C.s also step down today, W.Bro's. Richard Brown and Craig Kidd and I thank them both for their excellent contribution to the Province. Edward Wilkinson and Clive Hawkins take over as Provincial A.D.C.s from today.

And finally, although he will not be stepping down immediately, let me congratulate our Provincial Grand Secretary, W.Bro. Fraser McPherson, who later this year will be appointed as District Grand Master for the Royal and Select Masters, West Yorkshire. Fraser has done an excellent job as Provincial Secretary and we all wish him well in his new role. Gary Parker will be taking over as Provincial Secretary later this year with Warren Marsden continuing the excellent job he does as Deputy.

Social events still scheduled to take place this year are an Autumn Fayre on 18th October, a Christmas Ball on 5th December and our annual Carol Service on 13th December. Let's all hope that these events can take place as planned.

Our Festival has also been seriously affected by the Masonic suspension, with income from Lodge Raffles and Festival Events, plus donations made at Installation meetings all drying up. So please continue to support the Festival however else you can. The Masonic Cycle Challenge can still be sponsored on this web site, even though it will not now take place until later in the year. Just click on the MC² icon. There is also a Random Numbers Game to try. You might like to consider donating what you would normally pay into a Raffle, or even what you would normally pay for a Lodge meal in this way. Anything will help and will be greatly appreciated by me.

Now might also be the time to consider a regular Standing Order to the Cleeves and Whitehead Trust, which in turn supports our Festival.

The Mark Benevolent Fund have been particular supportive to Charities in our Province this year, with grants totalling more than £200,000. This included an Ambulance Support Vehicle for St John Ambulance, a Rapid Response Vehicle for Yorkshire Air Ambulance, a new Mini Bus for Martin House and refurbishment of a Barge for the Mirfield charity Safe Anchor Trust, as well as donations to 2 local Hospices and the Flood victims in South Yorkshire.

None of this wonderful work by the MBF could have been possible without successful Festivals across the Mark Provinces. This is why it is essential during the suspension that we look to find ways to support our own Festival, so that we in turn can support the MBF with a successful Festival in 2023.

Several Lodges and Brethren have qualified for their MBF Grand Patron Gold Awards since our last Meeting and I was going to present them with their collarets today. This will now be done later in the year. 16 Lodges have now reached Grand Patron Gold status and many more are well on their way, so I still expect the Province to qualify as Grand Patron Gold by 2023 as planned.

The Cleeves and Whitehead Trust also continues to do excellent work for us all. I thank the Trustees of the Trust for the magnificent pastoral care and support it gives to all Mark Masons in the Province and for the help it provides to our local communities. Also for the support it continues to give to the Mark Benevolent Fund and our Festival.

This year's Mark Grand Rank recipients were announced just 2 weeks ago, and as last year the Acting Ranks and First Appointments will be conferred in June, with Promotions being conferred in September. The Acting Ranks and First Appointment will assume their new Ranks on the day of the cancelled Grand Lodge meeting, which was due to take place on 9th June.

West Yorkshire has done particularly well this year with the following brethren receiving appointments. I ask them to stand for a moment if they are reading this personally at home !!

*With appointments to **Active Rank**:*

<i>W.Bro. John Maxwell</i>	<i>Knares' Castle 768</i>	<i>to</i>	<i>Grand Senior Deacon</i>
<i>and Edward Wilkinson</i>	<i>Old York T.I.</i>	<i>to</i>	<i>Grand Steward</i>

With First appointments to Past Rank:

<i>Paul Leach</i>	<i>St Chad 374</i>	<i>to</i>	<i>P.A.G.D.C.</i>
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<i>John Marrison</i>	<i>Danum 398</i>	<i>to</i>	<i>P.A.G.D.C.</i>
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<i>Gary Parker</i>	<i>Beaumont 1523</i>	<i>to</i>	<i>P.A.G.D.C.</i>
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<i>Derek Walsh</i>	<i>Integrity 110</i>	<i>to</i>	<i>P.A.G.D.C.</i>
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(via the Province of Cheshire)

My overriding concern still remains the welfare and health of our brethren and their families. To that end we have strengthened our Almoner Network by appointing two or more Area Almoners in each of the four I.M.A. areas. These Area Almoners will work with and liaise between the Provincial Grand Almoner and the Lodge Almoners as necessary, to make sure there are no gaps in our Almoner network.

We have also written personally to all brethren over 70 to inform them who to contact should they need help other than from their own Lodge Almoner.

The Provincial Almoner is working closely with the CHOICES Care and Support Officers and our own Welfare Officer to ensure that professional support and advice can be given when needed.

Brethren across the Province are being encouraged to keep in touch with each other, particularly with our older and more vulnerable members, many of whom may be isolated and alone. Many of them also rely on Freemasonry for their friendships, company and even for their meals. It is a way of life for them which has now been withdrawn. Pick up the phone and ring them.

The structure of the Mark Provincial web site www.westyorksmark.co.uk has also been changed to concentrate on supplying up to date information on the suspension, keeping us all in touch and focussing on the fun and enjoyment it is still possible for us to share as Mark Masons. It will be our main vehicle for communication over the next few months, so please visit it regularly and pass this message on to your Mark friends when you ring them. Also feed in your own stories so that they can be shared with others.

As mentioned earlier in this Address, you will also have seen the Weekly Suspension Bulletins, which are being issued every Monday morning by email to all Freemasons in the Province. Please make sure you read them, as they are designed to keep everyone informed of what is happening across all Orders locally during the suspension.

Brethren, I do hope that you have found this Address useful.

Our Mark and Royal Ark Mariner Freemasonry in the Province is still alive and well, despite our Lodges being closed. Our Mark family is still as close as it always was, despite us not meeting. And our Mark friendships are still as strong as ever, despite us not shaking hands.

We all leave our Mark on life, and when we get through this let it be said that we left our Mark well, and become even closer, from this period of being apart.

Keep safe, keep well and God bless you all.

Jim