

## PROVINCIAL GRAND MASTERS ADDRESS

Most Worshipful Pro Grand Master, Right Worshipful Brethren and Brethren all.

Brethren as I prepared to write this address all I could think of was my first night in Freemasonry, Harte Lodge 4217, on a cold December night 1997 in Hartlepool, the blind fold was removed and my masonic journey commenced and those intervening 25 years seem to have flashed by, leading to this beautiful summer day here in Gateshead.

And in some respects, I feel my masonic journey begins again, back then I started with room full of strangers who became friends. Today I'm more fortunate in that I start with a room full of friends.

I am extremely proud in having been appointed to lead the Province, what a privilege this is and what a responsibility when one looks at the illustrious names of my twenty-two predecessors who've gone before.

When I look out into this room, I see so many friends that I've made during my time in masonry, I thank you all for the many kind messages of support you have given me. I feel the excitement in the Province, and I feel the weight of expectation also.

During the 8 years I worked on the Festival I travelled the length and breadth of our Province, I'm very thankful for that role, it allowed me the opportunity to visit so many lodges and to meet so many masons and to see the commitment you have, not only for your own lodge, our masonic charity, but for freemasonry in general.

It's an amazing organisation we find our ourselves members of and we should be rightly proud of that.

The last few years has taught us that as an organisation we have to adapt to fit within our environment. To be conscious of the needs of our membership. Being a freemason isn't just about passing three degrees, it's the whole experience we find ourselves in, whether it's attending our own lodge, or when we visit.

We have to ask ourselves is our building fit for purpose, is our ritual the best it can be, do we enjoy our festive board, what can we change to provide greater enjoyment to our members.

These fundamentals are essential to cultivate, harness, maintain and grow our membership.

Brethren the membership pathway has been designed to help you to take those first steps, the Provincial team are here to help brethren, but you have to want that help.

In the first 5 months this year we had over 100 new initiates join lodges in our province. New members are out there, but it's important we keep them. Let's keep our lodges vibrant and fun, so our members want to return next month.

I'm also keen that we continue to promote our Royal Arch Masonry, and like I mentioned this morning at our convocation I encourage you all to educate our friends who are not members about the indissoluble link that exists between Craft Freemasonry and the Royal Arch, with the Royal Arch being considered the completion of a Freemason's journey in 'pure antient masonry'.

Communication is vital and it's so important we communicate effectively with our lodges but directly with our members, not only to communicate the business information from Province but dare I say the enjoyable and fun stuff.

From next week you will all receive a direct email to your inbox as we launch Durham Insight. This newsletter will cover anything, and everything connected to and beyond the Province.

It will cover provincial visits, certificate presentations, lodge & chapter events, Benevolence, Provincial Diary, Information from our Almoner, Charity Steward, The lights blues, The MCF, UGLE. Brethren you can read as little or as much as you like. The choice is yours. This newsletter is designed to keep you connected.

It's important you have your bond with your lodge, but I want you to bond and feel connected to your Province and our organisation as a whole.

My commitment to you is to ensure as an Executive we are doing our best to support you, our Province is here to support the freemasons of Durham.

I'm excited for the task ahead, I believe Freemasonry is a power for good in our Society and therefore I feel we can make a difference, not only to our own lives, but to the lives of those in the communities around us.

Brethren I'm immensely grateful to my predecessors for the work they have done in shaping our Province, I would like to pay particular thanks to WBro Gordon Brewis who retires as an Assistant Provincial Grand Master today and to VW Bro Stephen Walker who also retires as Deputy Provincial Grand Master, and who has guided us in these last 7 months as Deputy Provincial Grand Master in Charge, we are very grateful for their commitment and service and I will comment further at our Annual General meeting in September.

Most Worshipful Pro Grand Master, I am most grateful to you for not only the way in which you have installed me this afternoon but also for your support and advice and also that of the Grand Lodge team over the last few months

I hope Sir that you have enjoyed your trip north and you will take away positive feelings about Freemasonry in Durham.

To the Grand Director of Ceremonies, Very W Bro Hopkinson-Woolley, thank you and your colleagues, not only for your organisation but for the obvious expertise and professionalism you bring to our meeting. We have enjoyed watching you all in action here today.

I am also grateful for the support of my colleagues from our neighbouring Provinces in the North, Cumberland & Westmorland, Northumberland, and both Yorkshires and to your senior officers who have accompanied you today. We have valued your support in the past, we welcome you today and we look forward to many more happy occasions together in the future.

Thank you to the new Provincial Team, my Deputy Michael Graham, and the Assistant Provincial Grand Masters Andrew Moule, Clinton Leeks, John Watts and Andrew Foster and our Communications Officer Paul O'Doherty not only for accepting their respective offices but also for their commitment to work strenuously for the benefit of Freemasonry within the Province of Durham.

In forming our new Provincial Executive, I was keen to bring experience, but knowing each of them as I do their individual qualities & abilities will ensure as a team, they will form a formidable driving force.

I am also grateful to the Provincial Grand Secretary, W Bro Tom Gittins, his Deputy, W Bro Mike Davies, and the team including our volunteers at Provincial Office. It's fair to say the team has been rather busy of late keeping the day-to-day business running whilst organising 3 major events like this in a 10-week period. Brethren this office has adapted over the last couple of years and will continue to do so to meet the needs of the brethren. The office and its team are here to support our membership.

Can I take this opportunity to thank the team at the Fed for looking after us today?

Also, to the Provincial DC's Martin Rankin and Nigel Fallow and their respective teams, and not forgetting our wonderful Provincial Grand Stewards Lodge for their commitment & organisation not just today but at all our events. We are extremely grateful to be supported by this dedicated team.

And finally, to Ange my wife and my family who are my biggest supporters and always will be. Her support over the years has allowed me to stand here today for which I'm extremely grateful.

Always remember brethren our family has to come first before our freemasonry.

Brethren this Province is not just an annual meeting, or an office in Sunderland or a deputation to a lodge.

It's our whole community from our newest entered apprentice to our senior grand Officer and everything and everyone in between. I'm keen that we work as a whole to ensure freemasonry is strong in our Province.

We need to support each other, it's not all about an individual lodge or chapter.

I want to reach out to our friends in the other masonic orders in Durham to work together to promote the good of Freemasonry here in Durham.

I want everyone the chance to play their part in moving our Province forward to be more open, to stand proud as a freemason, to be proud of this organisation.

Brethren I'm extremely keen that as an organisation we are visible in our community, and we play an active part.

Our TLC team are actively engaging with our local hospitals and members of the public. Our fishing charity is active in our local

schools, our benevolent committee are constantly making a difference in so many lives through our community grants.

And at a lodge and chapter level I here so many stories of support and volunteering, we need to keep sharing this good news.

We do so much, but we can do so much more. I want us to make a real commitment to the armed service covenant that we signed, we must support our veterans and reservists where we can.

Brethren I have made a commitment here today to ensure freemasonry is strong in Durham and we follow the principles we hold dear, but I can't do it on my own, I need your help, support, and commitment also.

Don't just be a member of Provincial Grand Lodge of Durham be part of it !

### **We are stronger together**

During our recent festival we bonded as a Province under a common goal of fundraising whilst having an immense amount of fun, let's all make every effort to recreate that fun.

Finally, can I thank you all for coming today and for making this day so special for our Province and for the very kind attention you have given to this address.

Brethren. I'm proud to be a freemason, and extremely proud to lead this province, Thank you.