



ADDRESS BY THE MOST ILLUSTRIOUS GRAND MASTER

'Companions, I thank the Deputy Grand Master for his concluding statement which ostensibly marks the close of the Sesquicentenary Charity Appeal. I endorse all the plaudits issued by R.III.Comp. Paul Norman and convey both yours and my gratitude to him for conceiving, developing and overseeing what has been a quite tremendous achievement.

'I say again what I said when the figures were finally revealed: your response has been nothing short of magnificent! A stunning achievement which all Districts and their Companions should be justly proud of. I am also most grateful for the donations received from outside the Order, particularly from other Companion Orders and, of course, from other sources ranging from large Craft provinces to more modestly measured units such as the Mowers. I think that you should all give yourself a round of applause – please do so.'

The Most Illustrious Grand Master called off Grand Council and addressed the Companions as follows:

'I echo and endorse all the sentiments of gratitude expressed by the Deputy Grand Master especially that concerning R.III.Comp. James Newman and ask the Grand Director of Ceremonies to present him to me.

[The Most Illustrious Grand Master presented R.III.Comp. Newman with a cheque for £7,000 for the Masonic Charitable Foundation. He then announced that a donation of £3,500 was to be made to the Mark Benvolent Fund and asked R.III.Comp. John Prizeman, P.G.Chan., Pro Grand Master of the Mark, to receive the cheque on behalf of the Trustees of the Fund. R.III.Comp. Prizeman expressed his thanks for the very generous donation on behalf of the MBF and, in particular, for recipients of aid and assistance, petitioners and the worthy causes.]

The Grand Master called on Grand Council and continued his address as follows:

'And now, Companions, after all that excitement, I will bring you down to earth by delivering my address. 'It is a distinct pleasure to welcome you all to this Annual Assembly, our special day. I do so on behalf of Grand Council and all those who work behind the scenes to prepare for this meeting and to ensure that everyone has a great time. 'Thank you for demonstrating your support and loyalty by attending in such goodly numbers. In particular I welcome not only those who have received their well merited preferment, but to all those Companions who have travelled to support their colleagues and enjoy lunch together after what I hope has been an all-round memorable occasion.

I also express my gratitude to you for my election as your Grand Master. It is a fantastic privilege, and I am very conscious of the great responsibility which comes with that re-election, and I look forward to the year ahead with eager anticipation.

I know that I speak on behalf of you all when I heartily congratulate the Companions whom I have appointed to Grand Council rank or have promoted within it. Their investiture will have been a major and memorable event in their Cryptic careers. They should not need reminding that it doesn't stop here, and that their new status brings with it fresh responsibilities to go even further and achieve even greater goals – consider: if the sky's the limit, why are there footprints on the moon? Junior companions will now look to you for guidance and instruction, to share with them your experience and knowledge, for as Benjamin Franklin once said: "An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest".

Continuing the theme of promotion and appointment, there have been and will be some changes at District and Inspectorate level. We have a new District Grand Master for South Africa, in the person of Paul Knight, in consequence of the retirement of Jeff Spiller. Paul had been District Grand Master from 2016–2021 but has graciously agreed to have another go! Phillip Purves was installed into charge of Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Buckinghamshire in July – this was in consequence of the sudden and very sad death of Tim Hancock. Phillip, please take a bow! The newest kid on the block is John William Anthony White, installed as recently as February as District Grand Master for Derbyshire; this was in consequence of the retirement of Dr Alan Beckerton. John, please stand and be recognised.

Someone not quite gone (and I use that term advisedly!), still very much here, but who has announced his retirement, is the District Grand Master for London, Vincent Driver. I shall install his successor Simon White later in the year. The Grand Inspector for the Channel Islands,

V.III.Comp. Ken Rondel, will also be standing down and I will invest his successor, Derek Upton, on 18 June. We all offer them our congratulations and best wishes for an enjoyable and successful tenure, and we thank their predecessors for their magnificent service and may they all enjoy a happy retirement.

To my District Grand Masters and Grand Inspectors, of whom all within these shores are here today, I say thank you for the leadership and inspiration you give to your Districts and Inspectorates. The continued development of, and enthusiasm for, the Order is clear evidence of the success of the work you do and is worthy of special mention. I am also pleased to see the presence of several Custodians of the Ninth Arch and many Past District Grand Masters and Past Grand Inspectors today, actively supporting the Order and no doubt keeping a watchful eye on their successors. The Active Officers of Grand Council this year have responded magnificently whenever they have been called upon to perform their respective duties. Many travel considerable distances at their own expense, and I thank them all for their loyal support and enthusiasm.

I include all of you in these plaudits, from the Deputy Grand Master and Grand Principal Conductor of the Work right through the Team Sheet to the Grand Sentinel. I also thank the President and the members of the Executive Committee for their sound judgement and wise counsel (even when not asked for!) and for keeping me within due bounds.

The Silver Trowel and Excellent Masters programme remains firmly on track, and I am heartened to see that there is no plateauing off of enthusiasm for these degrees. During the last two meetings of Grafton Council of Anointed Kings No. 16, 16 Silver Trowel and 47 Excellent Master candidates were admitted to those degrees. I thank the members of that Council for their excellent work and also the Deputy Grand Master for presiding at the meeting in January this year when I was overseas on Masonic duties with another Order, enjoying an office which I am privileged to hold for only one year. I also express my gratitude for all the well conducted Silver Trowel conferrals executed by Installed Masters' Councils throughout the land.

Now I will give you a glance at the activities of Grand Council since we met last year. In June, I travelled to Singapore and Kuala Lumpur on Cryptic business, where I witnessed the Council named after me, K.J.J. No. 16, in action and was privileged to be appointed a Past Grand Master of South East Asia. I thank the Grand Master, Most Illustrious Companion Harry Chin, for that honour and for his limitless hospitality during that occasion.

In July, I was part of an unprecedented team of six Grand Masters who sojourned to South Africa, where amongst numerable other ceremonies in various Orders, in multi-tasking roles, I installed Paul Knight as District Grand Master. In my temporary absence, I was indebted to the Deputy Grand Master who graciously installed Phillip Purves as District Grand Master of Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Buckinghamshire.

The unmissable Croft Dinner was held in Tynemouth in August under the kind auspices of AMD Durham and RSM Northumberland, when their mega-raffle provided a generous donation to the 150th Charity Appeal. In September, I visited Flanders Council in Bruges and October saw the centenary meeting of Royal Hiram Council No. 35 (Cheshire and the Marches). In November, the Deputy Grand Master was royally entertained during a visit to Somerset and Wiltshire. In December I had the pleasure of presenting R.III.Comp. Graham Smith, P.Dist.G.M. for Kent and Past Grand Inspector of Jamaica and Cayman Islands, with his 50 year certificate at a meeting of his mother Council, Invicta Council in Canterbury.

In January I briefly visited Keith Hind Council, a Council that brings all the District Grand Masters together, keeps them in order, but also entertains and demonstrates to a very high standard. As you have already heard, I installed R.III.Comp John White as District Grand Master for Derbyshire on 1 February. And only last month the Grand PCW attended the Annual Meeting of Cumberland and Westmoreland. And finally, as recent as last Thursday, I presented a centenary certificate to Icenian Council No. 36 in Ipswich. It has been a most interesting and rewarding year.

'I now move on to one of the most agreeable aspects of this meeting, which is the opportunity to welcome visitors from our daughter Grand Councils, from overseas and the Rulers of our Companion Orders. May I ask you to refrain from your usual affectionate acclamation until I have finished what is quite a sizable list:

From the Grand Council of South East Asia, the Grand Master, M.III.Comp. Dr Harry Chin, accompanied by Ill.Comp. Anthony Downes, Dep.D.C.;

From the Grand Council of Greece, the Grand Master, M.III.Comp. Vasillios Papanikolaou, accompanied by your Grand Recorder, V.III.Comp. Konstantinos Karmarlis – it was good to meet you on home soil recently;

From the Grand Council of India, the Deputy Grand Master and G.M. designate? R.III.Comp. Bharat Epur. Bharat, my personal thanks are due for looking after us in India in December and for all your help and support in Manila earlier this year;

From Sri Lanka, R.III.Comp. David Rose, P.G.Coun.;

From the Inspectorate of Jamaica and the Cayman Islands, the Grand Inspector, R.III.Comp. Harding Watler, P.G.Coun., accompanied by Ill.Comp. Robert Whorms, and of course R.III.Comp. Graham Smith, P.G.Insp.;

From the District of South and East Caribbean, V.III.Comp. Ralph Craig, P.G.Lect., Dep.Dist.G.M., accompanied by Ill.Comp. Errol Clarke, P.G.Cond.C., and Ill.Comp. Richard Lindsay, P.G.St.B. – both recipients today;

From South Africa, Ill.Comp. Leslie Martin, P.G.Stwd. Leslie, I suspect that the M.E. & S. G.M. is also delighted to see his Provincial Prior here today;

And a veritable invasion from Flanders Council No. 177 in support of my new Grand Standard Bearer, Ill.Comp. Geoffery Kavanagh, in the persons of Ill.Companions Jean Verbist, Gilbert Denys, Pierre Ambrody, David Cross, Laurence Kavanagh, Panagioutis Giotopoulos and Comp. Michael Havanagh; From other Grand Councils in the USA – from Missouri, M.III.Comp. Bill Snyder, P.G.M., and from Utah, M.III.Comp, Jason Verber, P.G.M.

'It is always comforting to have the support of the Heads of our Companion Orders and with equal enthusiasm I welcome:

R.III.Comp. John Prizeman, P.G.Chan. – Pro Grand Master, Mark and RAM;

R.III.Comp. Paul Clement, P.G.Chan. – M.E. & S. G.M. of the United Orders of the Temple;

R.III.Comp. Graham Flight, P.G.Chan. – Grand Sovereign, Red Cross of Constantine;

R.III.Comp. Tom Jackson, P.G.Chan. – Grand Master, Allied Masonic Degrees;

R.III.Comp. Andrew Sweeney, P.G.Chan. – Grand Supreme Ruler, Order of the Secret Monitor;

R.III.Comp. Dr Paul Mycock, P.G.Chan. – First Grand Master Mason of the Operatives;

R.III.Comp. Christopher Maiden, P.G.Chan. – Grand High Priest, KTP and Order HW;

R.III.Comp. Vivian Thomas, JP, P.G.Coun. – Grand Master, KBHC;

R.III.Comp. Anthony Llewellyn, P.G.Coun. – Supreme Magus, Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia;

V.III.Comp Gareth Jones, OBE, P.G.Lect. – 3rd Grand Principal, Supreme Grand Chapter of England.

'It is also wonderful to have the Past Deputy Grand Master, His Hon. Ian Alexander here, and two Past GPCWs, John Chambers and Richard Gan. Companions, our distinguished visitors. [Applause].

'I make no apology for repeating and underlining the need to keep your Craft, Royal Arch and Mark Lodges actively functioning. Without them there is no us. The RA plays a pinnacle part in our mysteries and by supporting your RA Chapters, keeping them vibrant and relevant, all Royal and Select candidates will have a really good grounding. This is provided by the expansion of the legend of the Temple after the death of HA (which some of you will appreciate that I will experience later in the year!). Suitable candidates will then be ready to deepen and expand their knowledge when joining our beautiful Order.

'Now, a word about what you do in your own Councils. It is essential that the best possible standards are achieved and maintained. Imbuing a sense of purpose at your Council Meetings and doing everything possible for the Candidate and his Ceremony – keep him involved, keep him impressed. Every little helps, no matter how small an initiative. It will bring bigger satisfaction, success, and will almost certainly lead to further recruitment. As the Dali Lama once said: "If you think that something is too small to be effective, try sleeping with a mosquito!"

'On the subject of small initiatives that achieve big results, I commend Ill.Comp. Peter James and Comp. Stephen Farmer of Cheshire and the Marches for their "Final part of the jigsaw" innovation, now on business cards and with the keyring being launched at their District Meeting in May. Who knows, but subject to copyright and cost, we could well launch this across the Constitution. Watch this space!

'I am looking forward to the year ahead which, amongst other things will include a consecration in Warwickshire, and installations in Jersey and London. I am encouraged by the small but gradual growth in our numbers and by the way that District Grand Masters are dealing with the rarity of resignations. We are on a roll, Companions, let's keep that momentum going.

'Before I conclude it would be ungracious of me not to draw attention to those who merit our gratitude today. The Grand Recorder and his staff, for whom this meeting is a high peak in a whole range of mountainous activities, and the largely anonymous and often unsung men and ladies in the background who have contributed to today's success. Last year I referred to him as our freshly unwrapped Grand Recorder, but with a year under his belt R.III.Comp. Dan Heath, P.G.Coun., has now fully established himself and commands total respect, and I add – admiration. [Applause].

'To the GDC and his team, all who have borne the heat and burden of ceremonial pressure with ease and excellence, not only today but throughout the year. And, of course, to John Vasquez and the staff of Freemasons' Hall. More applause, I think.

'I will leave you with this thought to take back to your Districts, Inspectorates and Councils:

The astronaut Jim Lovell once said: "There are people who make things happen. There are people who watch things happen, and there are some people who wonder what on earth has happened! To be successful you need to be that person who make things happen!"

'So, I depend upon you all, Companions, to make things happen in this Order, which is very special. Please keep it so.

'Finally, Companions, be of one mind, live in peace and may the Supreme Master of the Universe delight to dwell amongst you and bless you for evermore.'