



The Grand Council of Royal and Select Masters of England and Wales and its Districts and Councils Overseas

Companions all

You will all be aware that our annual meeting of Grand Council, scheduled for today will not now take place. Towards the end of that meeting, I would have addressed all present, I now attach a sample of some of the things I would have said.

Today is extra special for those Companions who are to serve as officers of Grand Council for the ensuing year, together with those who I have appointed or promoted to Past Grand Rank.

May you have many happy years ahead - to enjoy your hard earned and truly merited reward. Please remember it is your duty to continue to set an example to others and encourage them to emulate your endeavours. I regret not having had the privilege of personally investing you but be assured that your new rank becomes active and effective from today.

To you all – well done, you are now charged with the duty of continuing to strive for the future health, strength and development of our order. Try to maintain the highest standards. Remember only the mediocre are always at their best!

My next duty is to thank the outgoing team of Grand Officers for their services.

Throughout the year you have been engaged in duties on behalf of Grand Council, as well as in your Districts and in your own Councils, by assisting in our ceremonies, imparting knowledge of our order and furthering the understanding of where the cryptic degrees sit within contemporary freemasonry.

I mention two in particular who are this year standing down from active office.

Louis Keats now a Right Illustrious Companion has served the Pastoral Department of our Order since 2011 as Assistant, Deputy and since 2016 Grand Chaplain. In those nine years he has assisted me and my predecessor in many ceremonies and has delivered countless excellent orations.

John Hitchen now a Very Illustrious Companion has provided our ceremonial music for some eight years as Deputy and as Grand Organist since 2013, he has been enhancing our Consecrations and Installations with his delightful music all that time.

I wish to thank both these stalwarts for their outstanding contribution to the strength and development of the order, their promotion is very well deserved.

I also wish to thank the presently permanent members of the Team - the Deputy Grand Master, Grand PCW, Grand Chancellor, President of the Executive, Grand Recorder, the GDC, Assistant Grand Recorder and the Grand Sentinel. I thank them for their unstinting support and ever ready supply of counsel and advice – even when not asked for!

I will now give you a brief account of the activities of Grand Council during the past year.

It has been a relatively quiet year, void of consecrations, but I am content with that status quo. As I said at the District Grand Master's Conference, we are enjoying a period of calm consolidation. The order in response to popular demand; has in the past expanded rapidly. This has been especially so since the inception of the Silver Trowel. We are now taking time for those newish councils to develop. This is not to say that there is a moratorium on new councils, far from it. If areas are identified where the order can be sustainably and legitimately expanded, such opportunities must to be embraced.

We have also welcomed three new District Grand Masters.

In early May, I had the pleasure of installing Right Illustrious Companion Tim Hancock as District Grand Master for Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Buckinghamshire. This was of course in consequence of the very sad death of Nick Murzell.

In July I had the further pleasure of installing Right Illustrious Companion Bob Potts as District Grand Master for Essex. This was in consequence of the retirement of John Jacobson in respect of whom; I paid tribute to last year.

In October I had the privilege of installing Right Illustrious Companion Group Captain Peter Brindle as District Grand Master for Hertfordshire. This was as the result of the retirement of Colin Hellyer who had served that district since 2011. Colin devoted 8 years of tireless industry and commitment to Hertfordshire and to our order. His wealth of knowledge and experience; has left them in good stead. Colin, I thank you so much and wish you good health and happiness in your retirement.

In June I was pleased to accompany the Grand Recorder on a visit to our Daughter Constitution, the Grand Council of South East Asia in Kuala Lumpur, where we were made most welcome by their Grand Master the late K C Cheah, who sadly passed to higher service last month.

In July I visited Cedrus council no. 149 on the Isle of Man, where, I was most impressed by their enthusiasm for the order and the quality of their ritual and ceremonial. The welcome and hospitality provided by our Manx Companions was nothing less than overwhelming.

September 9th was a memorable date in the diaries of East Anglia and Grand Council, when I was delighted to present Herbert de Lonsinga council no. 33, with their Centenary Warrant, at a well-attended and well-prepared assembly in Great Yarmouth.

In early November our 'Outreach Programme', really outreached itself, when we conferred the ems degree on a number of candidates in Barbados. I am indebted to the Grand Sovereign, Grand Eusebius, and Grand Marshal of the Grand Imperial Conclave of the Red Cross, and the Assistant Grand Recorder, for playing major roles in a quite delightful ceremony. We were ably assisted by some local Companions together with a sterling performance in the chair by the ubiquitous David Rose, now our Grand Councillor.

Whilst I was doing this, Phipps Dorman Council No. 32 celebrated their Centenary and I am much obliged to the Deputy Grand Master, who travelled to the Tally Ho Centre in Edgbaston to present their warrant. I am reliably informed that it was a marvellous occasion, enjoyed by all – particularly the Deputy Grand Master, albeit he was disappointed not to have seen any foxes!

We will not see another Centenary until next year, when we will also celebrate a Sesquicentenary.

In December I travelled to Chennai, to represent us at the installation of Most Illustrious Companion Stephen Hinds, as Grand Master of the Grand Council of India, another of our Daughter Constitutions.

So you can see Companions it has actually been quite an eventful year.

On other activities – since last year 113 Companions have received the Silver Trowel and 71 the Excellent Masters.

I remain extremely grateful to the members of Grafton Council of Anointed Kings no. 16, for their continued expertise in conferring both of these degrees and of course to the other

Installed Masters Councils which provide access to the Silver Trowel in their part of the world.

My next duty is to thank all my District Grand Masters and my two District Grand Inspectors for their loyalty and personal support over the years that I have been in office and before. They have all discharged their duties to the highest standards and with first class results. When Districts were first established there were 122 councils with just over 3, 000 members, today there are 250 councils with almost 5, 000 members. I am grateful to them all for their continuing pursuit of excellence.

Companions, I cannot let this year go, without drawing attention once again to the great debt of gratitude we all owe to those who organise, administer and direct cryptic masonry throughout the year. For some of them it is their job, one that they enjoy enormously, but many others are volunteers. That they volunteer for such great responsibility, speaks volumes of how highly they prize our order.

I must add to these words of appreciation, our acknowledgement of the work done, advice given and support rendered by the Grand Recorder and his staff. I have asked him to convey to all on the 4th floor, how much we value all they do on our behalf throughout the year. To thank them in particular for their patience and courtesy shown to us at all times.

I thank the Grand Director of Ceremonies and his team of Deputies and the Grand Sentinel for all the arrangements, preparation and ceremonial executed during the year. Executed, I might add with all the dignity, precision and professionalism that is as good as you will find in any order of freemasonry.

In addition, Companions, my thanks are again due to all of you, for what you do for your Councils and your districts. Those thanks are extended to include your wives, partners and families who sometimes have to endure whilst we enjoy.

My prime objective continues to be, to enhance the strength and development of our order, making it more readily available to those who qualify to join. Our successful growth will be promoted and encouraged, by investing energy and effort in keeping our craft, royal arch and mark units alive and kicking. You all know the quality of a candidate we would welcome, who would benefit your council and in return get so much out of Cryptic Masonry themselves. Seek them out and offer them an opportunity to deepen their knowledge and enjoyment within the Order of Royal and Select Masters.

At this moment in time, you may imagine such words seem redundant, during the current national crisis, but when all returns to normal you will have had ample time to reflect and thus come back with renewed vigour. When those happy times arrive, and you wonder what you yourself can do in furtherance of these objectives – ask yourselves these four questions.

Why? – Why not? – Why not me? – Why not now?

Grasp that moment Companions, be successful and happy in your Cryptic Masonry – it is very special please keep it that way.

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 forevermore.

May He keep you and yours safe and well during these challenging and unprecedented times.

Thank you.