

ADDRESS BY THE RIGHT WORSHIPFUL PROVINCIAL GRAND MASTER GRAHAM IVES TO THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE PROVINCIAL GRAND LODGE ON WEDNESDAY 9th MAY 2018

Brethren, welcome to the 225th Meeting of Provincial Grand Lodge. It is wonderful to see so many of you present and I do hope that you are enjoying your day as much as I am.

As always it has been a great pleasure and privilege for me to appoint and promote brethren to Provincial Grand Rank. These appointments and promotions are carefully thought out and I warmly congratulate you all. You all deserve this recognition and I do know that you will continue to work hard for the benefit of Freemasonry both within your Lodges and the Province.

It is wholly appropriate that I now formally thank the outgoing Wardens, Worshipful Brothers Michael Gerry and Peter Tong, for travelling great distances around the Province representing me at all the Lodges in an official capacity. I have read their very helpful and constructive reports and I do know that their presence has been appreciated by the brethren of the Lodges.

I have been delighted to make many Official Visits throughout the Province with the Provincial Team. I have enjoyed the company of the Team very much and I believe that they have also obtained much enjoyment by visiting the Lodges with me. I also consider that the brethren of the Lodges are always very pleased to welcome us. We have had a wonderful time and I am most grateful to the Team and the brethren of the Lodges for their hospitality and companionship.

At the Quarterly Meeting of Grand Lodge last March, I was proud to witness Worshipful Brothers Phillip Odling and Paul Anyan invested to the Grand rank of Past Assistant Grand Director of Ceremonies. I was equally proud to enjoy the Promotion of Worshipful Brother Ian Pounder to the high rank of Past Junior Grand Deacon. Last month our hardworking Provincial Grand Secretary, Worshipful Brother Tony Miller, and Provincial Grand Treasurer, Worshipful Brother Stephen Hallberg, were invested to the Grand ranks of Past Assistant Grand Director of Ceremonies and Past Grand Standard Bearer respectively.

Brethren, we warmly congratulate all these brethren who I am sure you will agree have thoroughly deserved their appointments and promotions.

I am delighted to welcome to Provincial Grand Lodge the Worshipful Masters of the Lodges in the Province. They are all seated together in a designated area of the Lodge Room. They are so important to the future of Freemasonry in Lincolnshire and I would be grateful if they would stand so that we can all appreciate their presence and wish them well in the future.

Brethren, I now take this opportunity to express my deep gratitude to a number of brethren who have made today such a success. I thank the Provincial Grand Secretary, Worshipful Brother Tony Miller, for his hard work, loyalty and friendship. He really leads from the front in the Provincial Office. He has been supported by Mrs Lorraine Miller, who is a worthy successor to Mrs Gene Reader, and Worshipful Brothers Stewart Oxborough, Stephen Swaby and Keith Appleton. I take this opportunity in Provincial Grand Lodge to formally and warmly thank Worshipful Brother Stewart Oxborough for all that he has done in the Provincial Office over a large number of years. He has of course retired from his duties and I did have the pleasure of marking his retirement and achievements by presenting him in his Lodge with my Certificate of Merit a few months ago. I know that he will continue to support the Province.

The contribution of Worshipful Brother Noel Fisher, the Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies, has been immense during the course of the last year and in the weeks leading up to this Meeting. I am always happy and comfortable in his presence thanks to his warmth and attentive demeanour. I also thank his Deputies, Worshipful Brothers Phillip Odling and Wayne Hodgkinson. They have been ably supported by the Assistant Provincial Grand Directors of Ceremonies. The success of the Meeting relies very much upon the teamwork and efficiency of the Directors of Ceremonies. It is there for all to see today.

The sound system is very important and I thank Worshipful Brothers Don Osborne and Jon Hollis for all that they have done. This is a difficult task and they have handled it with great sensitivity.

As always, I have been inspired by the music of the Provincial Grand Organist, Worshipful Brother David Shepherd. I am very proud of the music played during our Ceremonies in Lincolnshire and it is heart-warming to witness Worshipful Brother Shepherd in action and knowing that he is thoroughly enjoying his Office. Long may that continue.

The members of the Provincial Grand Stewards' Lodge have worked so hard during the weeks leading up to the Meeting and during the Meeting itself. This enables all of us to enjoy ourselves very much and they give up large parts of their time to assist me and the Province. They look after the needs of all our distinguished guests and indeed the brethren of the Province.

The brethren of the St. Hugh Lodge No. 1386 have hosted this Meeting and I thank them all. I also thank all the brethren of Lincoln generally and indeed any other brethren who have assisted with regard to this Meeting. I single out again Worshipful Brother Martin Pettit who works so quietly and unselfishly for the benefit of us all.

Brethren, as you know this is the last Meeting of Provincial Grand Lodge which I shall preside over as Provincial Grand Master. A number of weeks ago Stuart Pearcey, part of the editorial team for the Masonic Lincs magazine, interviewed me. I reflected for about two hours in his company about what had taken place during my terms of office as Provincial Grand Master and as Grand Superintendent over the last ten years. As a result of that interview an article was produced for the magazine and which was distributed very recently. Hence, brethren, I do not intend to reflect today upon the last ten years. I was determined at the start of my terms of Office that there should be no periods of drift and I believe that I have been successful in this respect with the considerable help of so many brethren and their families.

Hence in this Address I look forward. However in order to look forward it is necessary in some respects to look back. In his Address at the Quarterly Meeting of Grand Lodge in March 2018 the Pro Grand Master stated: "I have said it before and I say again I strongly believe that the future is bright for Freemasonry. We created a bow wave of optimism last year which produced a surge of interest in the Craft. We must now ensure that we maintain the momentum created and build on that legacy, and we will".

The Pro Grand Master also stated in the latest edition of Freemasonry Today: "Brethren, has there been a better time to be a Freemason? I really believe that during the year we have learned so much about how to talk about our Freemasonry with non-members, helped enormously by the Sky documentary, which has opened our eyes and made the general public more receptive nonetheless, I think we can go forward from here with enormous self-belief and pride".

Brethren, there is so much to look forward to. 2017 was a momentous year in Freemasonry. We celebrated the Tercentenary with great style both in Lincolnshire and indeed in London. It was in 1717 when a group of men from four London Lodges got together at the Goose and Gridiron Tavern in St. Paul's churchyard and agreed to establish the first Grand Lodge. This was the commencement of organised Freemasonry. We were all so proud to be part of the Tercentenary celebrations. Who would have thought from those small beginnings that Freemasonry would have developed and thrived over the next three hundred years in the way that it has? Freemasonry is of course universal and spread all over the world. We have approximately 200,000 members in this country. Brethren, we must have got something right!

Ever since my Initiation on the 15th March 1973, one day before my 23rd Birthday, I have always been immensely proud to be a Freemason. When I woke up on the morning of my Birthday I knew that it was a special day. I remember it vividly. It was obviously special because it was my Birthday but more important I somehow knew that something monumental had happened to me the night before. We all remember our Initiation into Freemasonry and I remember vividly the warmth and friendship which was extended to me by all the brethren present. That has continued from that date unabated.

So, brethren, 2017 is a year to reflect upon with great pleasure and pride. I thoroughly enjoyed the Tercentenary Celebrations in Lincolnshire which climaxed with the wonderful Cathedral Service in Lincoln on the 28th September last. What a splendid sight to see the brethren of Lincolnshire and their masonic guests in full masonic regalia and also to be in the presence of our families. It was a very fitting way to celebrate the Tercentenary in Lincolnshire.

The event organised by the United Grand Lodge of England in the Royal Albert Hall and in the presence of The Most Worshipful The Grand Master His Royal Highness the Duke of Kent on the 31st October was a magnificent occasion and exceeded my expectations. We certainly celebrated the Tercentenary in such a way that all of us who were present will never forget.

I refer to the Tercentenary celebrations because I consider that their resounding success provides us with a platform to move forward with confidence.

It is sad that we have been attacked in recent months yet again within the media. You know that we have again been the subject of 'fake news'. However, in a way that has been productive for us because the response from Grand Lodge has been to deal with it in a robust manner. This was led by the Chief Executive Officer, Very Worshipful Brother David Staples, who is now of course the Grand Secretary and the Grand Scribe Ezra. His campaign of 'Enough is Enough' has been extremely effective and I feel brethren that my morale has been raised because I have felt, and I believe that you have as well, that we are well and truly standing up for ourselves against scurrilous and unjust attacks upon our integrity.

So, brethren, in the last three hundred years there have been ups and downs in Freemasonry both in Lincolnshire and throughout the Constitution. However, for all the reasons that have been stated I firmly believe that Freemasonry in Lincolnshire and elsewhere is going through and enjoying a golden age. We are well and truly on the up and there is a great deal for us to look forward to.

Brethren, you know how passionate I am about the Royal Arch. My term as Provincial Grand Master would not have been complete unless I had also had the honour and privilege of being your Grand Superintendent. In the same way that the Craft is on the up so is Royal Arch on the up, particularly in Lincolnshire. There have been a number of very effective initiatives and the success is reflected in the increase in numbers of Royal Arch Masons in the Province which continues to be a healthy percentage in relation to the number of Craft masons. Long may this continue. Brethren, those of you who have not yet taken the step to complete your journey through pure and antient Freemasonry by being exalted into the Royal Arch please consider doing so and those brethren who are already Royal Arch Masons please continue to encourage Master Masons to take that important and crucial next step.

Brethren, I retire from both Offices on the 1st July next. It has been a great honour and privilege to serve you and this Province. I have often said that when we are initiated into Freemasonry we embark upon a never ending magical journey of self-knowledge and fulfilment. That has always been the case with me and I shall continue on that journey, hand in hand with yourselves, after the 1st July.

On the 12th July next in this building my very worthy successor, Worshipful Brother David Wheeler, will be Installed as your Provincial Grand Master and Grand Superintendent. I am confident that he is the man to take the Province forward into further prosperity and success. I know that he will not only receive my support but will receive the support of all the Brethren and Companions in the Province and indeed beyond. He is in for a wonderful time and we all warmly wish him well.

Brethren, I thank you all from the bottom of my heart for all your friendship and support during the last ten years. I hope to be with you for many years to come. So, brethren, in the unforgettable words of Forrest Gump, "That's all I have to say about that"! God bless you all.