

Companions, I see from the Summons that it is now my task to address you. And it is indeed a very pleasant task.

I must thank you all for your attendance here this morning. I have already welcomed our Distinguished Guests. Their presence adds a lustre and dignity to our Meeting and I thank them again for their support.

I congratulate all the Companions I have appointed to or promoted in Provincial Grand Rank this morning. I need not remind you that these honours are not only a reward for past service but are to be regarded as an opportunity and incentive for further services to Royal Arch Masonry in this Province.

In particular I am keen that the custom of Officers of the year, both acting and past ranks, of supporting me and the other Rulers at nights of Chapter installations, continues and grows.

In addition I would urge all the Provincial Officers and Grand Officers to support the initiative of supporting smaller Chapters at their regular meetings. This initiative is being coordinated by Ex Companion Michael Taylor, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Provincial Grand Principal, and I urge you to give your support as best you can.

I thank all the Provincial officers who have supported the Province throughout the past year. I know that your attendance at meetings has been greatly appreciated and hope that you have enjoyed the opportunity.

Our congratulations also go to those Companions receiving appointment or promotion at the meeting of Supreme Grand Chapter on April the 28<sup>th</sup>. Ex Companion Jeremy Mallin is to be appointed to PGStB in recognition not only of his exemplary service as 3<sup>rd</sup> Provincial Grand Principal, but his past and on-going support of Royal Arch Masonry throughout Worcestershire. Well deserved!

I am also pleased to congratulate Ex Companion Geoff Weston on his promotion to PGSwdB

David Macey to PDepGSwdB

Michael Fellows to PAsstGSoj

And Michael Taylor to PAsstGSoj

All richly deserved and each a great credit to this Province.

Last April I emphasised the importance of Communication in the Province. I have therefore instituted the office of Information Officer and am pleased that Ex Companion John Yeates has accepted the challenge. John's first task was to oversee the review and relaunch of the Provincial

Website. Working with our Webmaster, Ex Companion Robin Symes, John has added a new energy and vitality and I thank them both for their great efforts. But we need your input Companions to make it a living and, therefore useful, tool. Anniversaries, special events, outstanding achievements, notable candidates – whatever is newsworthy – let us know.

[www.worcestershirepgchapter.org.uk](http://www.worcestershirepgchapter.org.uk) – put it in your browser and stay informed.

At the meeting of the Worcestershire Installed First Principles Chapter in June last year, I announced a number of significant initiatives aimed at increasing recruitment and retention.

First, the information packs for Master Masons when they receive their Grand Lodge Certificate. These have been well received and I believe sow the right seed at the earliest opportunity.

Second, the presentation to Master Masons, to be given on nights of Lodge or Chapter meetings. This has now been performed 4 times – at Dudley, Northfield, Tenbury Wells and Stourbridge – each stimulating interest and on many occasions producing a signed application form.

Third, a Commentary on the Exaltation Ceremony – designed to create a

greater knowledge and understanding of our beautiful Order. This was premiered at Kings Heath Chapter last month and was well received.

This is an on-going exercise and we are currently reviewing and hopefully improving the content and mechanics. Watch this space – we already have bookings for 2012!

It is my intention to continue to utilise the Worcestershire Installed First Principles Chapter as a key channel of communication and will be announcing further initiatives at the June meeting.

You are all aware that when the current Worcestershire Provincial Grand Chapter ritual book was published in 2005, as well as containing the mandatory changes which Supreme Grand Chapter required us all to make, it included a number of optional changes which Grand Chapter had suggested be made to the ritual.

One of these was the passages towards the bottom of page 19 and top of page 20 of our ritual book commencing “In the degrees which you received in the Craft.....” and finishing with “...of the Order of which you are now a member”.

These passages are identified as being delivered by J and H or

alternatively by the MEZ.

Whilst some Chapters in the Province have chosen to adopt this optional change, others have not.

It is essential that we are all able to articulate what Royal Arch is about and I feel that the words contained in these two paragraphs encapsulate its meaning very well and that to have them given to the Exalte would undoubtedly help him to understand the objects of the Order.

If your Chapter does not already include the paragraphs in the Exaltation ceremony, I urge you to reconsider.

In addition, I do hope that they will be delivered in a clear, articulate manner by either the Principals identified in the book or, perhaps, a past Z.

Please be clear that the paragraphs remain an optional part of the ceremony. My wish is simply to increase the understanding and enjoyment of the Order amongst all Worcestershire Royal Arch Masons.

On behalf of the Provincial Grand Master, I congratulate and thank you for your unqualified support of the 2011 Festival. Chapters in this Province have contributed over £80,000 and I urge you to continue to support the Appeal right up to and including the 3<sup>rd</sup> of June.

You are all aware that Supreme Grand Chapter has launched the Royal Arch Masons 2013 Bicentenary Appeal to support the Royal College of Surgeons research fellowship scheme.

It is my intention that Worcestershire will actively support this Appeal and far surpass any targets set for us. Today I appointed a new Provincial Charity Steward and I know that he will be talking to you all in the not too distant future. Although it is possible to send donations directly to London, I would prefer that all donations are routed via WAMCO, so that we can keep an accurate record of our giving. If you do donate directly please let us know.

This last 12 months for me have been interesting to say the least but above all very enjoyable and fulfilling. The progress we are making is very encouraging. That progress would not be possible without the unstinting support of the Deputy Grand Superintendant, and the Second and Third Provincial Grand Principals.

I cannot too highly praise their willingness to take on responsibilities and to deliver – on time and with a smile - and I thank them most sincerely.

Today I invested a new Third Provincial Grand Principal. We wish him well and I know you will greet him well when he attends your Chapter.

A new Third means goodbye to the old. Ex Comp Michael Cox I cannot thank you too much for your support during the last 12 months. Your commitment has been second to none, your enthusiasm constant and above all, your friendship greatly appreciated.

Companions, a word on numbers.

You have seen that the Membership of Royal Arch in Worcestershire fell during 2010, although the number of Exaltations rose.

As you know we have introduced a procedure to contact every Companion when they resign. But in reality it is usually too late to influence that decision, although we are having some success.

Companions what we need is Q E D. Quick Early Diagnosis. We must identify those Companions who for whatever reason are not attending the meetings of their Chapter. We must find out the reason for non-attendance and if possible remedy the cause.

I charge the Proposers of Candidates and all the Past Principles to take responsibility for retaining members and encouraging a full and active participation in our beautiful and friendly Order.

I must thank all those without whom this Meeting would not take place.

The Provincial Office, in particular the Provincial Grand SE, Ex Companion Michael Cole and the Assistant SE, Ex Comp Ian Fothergill. Ian will be retiring in the summer; we thank him for his hard work and assistance. These Companions work tirelessly on our behalf and we all thank them for their commitment and their sense of humour.

We thank the Host Chapters and Provincial Stewards for all their hard work.

The Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies, the Deputy and Assistant DC's, for their planning and care in the organisation of today.

And I must of course mention the Sound System.

Finally, I thank you all for your support over the last 12 months.

I knew what a great privilege it would be to be your Grand Superintendant.

I quickly discovered what challenges face Freemasonry in general and this Supreme Order in particular.

I charge you all to continue to support this wonderful Province of Worcestershire

And above all I wish you all good health to enjoy your Royal Arch

Masonry

Thank you for listening.