

Brethren,

Thank you all for attending. As members of the Order, we are all engaged in other Masonic activities, so thank you for taking time out from your busy schedules and supporting this special meeting.

The Annual Meeting is an occasion when we celebrate the successes of the year past and look forward with positivity and excitement to the year ahead.

You may have noticed I am wearing a new Provincial Grand Supreme Ruler's robe. I actually commissioned this robe so I could wear it to celebrate our fiftieth anniversary in 2024, but, as usual, circumstances worked against me.

I'm delighted to finally be able to wear it and present it to the Province, and hope it will prove fruitful in our development in the years ahead.

Brethren, we have had another very positive and prosperous year. We have gained 19 inductees and welcomed 10 Joining members, either re-joining or incomers from other Provinces.

My figures differ from our Provincial Grand Guide as I'm able to compile my statistics yesterday!

Sadly, we have suffered losses due to illness and moving on to the Grand Conclave above, but the overall membership of the Province has increased by 10, and an increase of unique members by 8, meaning our overall unique membership is now 190.

It would be a fantastic achievement if we could push that figure to 200 within the next 12 months.

The delightful aspect of this growth is we are finding candidates of exceptional quality, giving the Order and the Province a positive and optimistic future.

I am very pleased to say that I have been present at each of the Inductions and witnessed some excellent ceremonies. I would like to thank every Officer who has taken part in each of the ceremonies for providing such a fantastic welcome to every new member.

I have, of course, spoken to each of the new members following their ceremonies, and, without exception, have said they fully enjoyed the experience.

A couple of years ago, following a suggestion from the Grand Supreme Ruler, I requested that the Muster Role be delayed until after an Induction ceremony and presented a talk to the new member to explain what was about to happen.

This has been well received by all, and I hope it is providing not only our new members with an introduction into the principles of the Order, but also a reminder to all members of our Masonic duty to care for each other.

Another delightful welcome for our new members is attendance.

We are maintaining an average attendance at all meetings of just over 20, but this rises to an average of 23 for an Induction Ceremony, with three meetings attracting 28 attendance and two in excess of 30, the record for the year being a Team Visit to Norton Priory Conclave, when 35 Brethren witnessed an excellent Prince's ceremony delivered by Worthy Brother Jacob Potter and his team, assisted by Very Worthy Brother Peter Schick who delivered the Lecture.

Average membership attendance in all Conclaves has grown to 74% of members, which is a delightful statistic, demonstrating that our members want to attend their own meetings when they are able.

Conclave Visiting Deacons, or someone else from the member's Conclave, continue to maintain contact with the missing members, establish genuine reasons for non-attendance and encourage them to maintain contact with the Order and attend a future meeting.

Whilst mentioning attendance, it would be remiss of me not to thank our Provincial Grand Chancellor and his Support Squad, who are available to fill in for any office as required. Members of the Squad travel around to most Conclaves, and always seem available to take any office as requested.

When we started the initiative, there was a concern that Conclave Officers would take the opportunity of avoiding the delivery of good ritual, but I'm delighted that hasn't been the case.

Worthy Brother Jim, thank you for everything you and all of the team do, and look forward to their continuing company in the year ahead.

Likewise, I would like to thank all of the Provincial Officers for their support during the year, and look forward to working with the new team.

The statistics I maintain about attendance make interesting reading, especially at this time of year when we draw a line after one season and look forward to the next.

After a bold show last year, Worthy Brother Trevor Simcock has dropped from top to second in the attendance stakes, with 26 out of a possible 44 meetings attended.

Our Provincial Recorder, Alan Harrison, maintains third place with Graham Kirby, Provincial Grand Visitor, both scoring 24.

But climbing to the top place is Worthy Brother Derek Gaskell, attending 28 meetings, and always is enthusiastic to be involved in whatever ceremony in whatever position is required. I don't think he's attended many meetings where he's not actually done something.

Derek, thank you for your continued support.

I must also thank our DC Team, who support me and the Province at many meetings. Unfortunately, they have needed to cover for Worthy Brother David Ainsworth, who, as we all know, is not well, and I would like to thank Worthy Brother Ian Brown for stepping up to Assistant Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies, and I look forward to continuing to work with you all during the coming year.

Our fundraising has continued to support local small charities.

I had great pleasure in visiting The Children's Adventure Farm Trust in Millington, just outside of Altrincham.

The charity provides a range of activities and relief for challenged and disadvantaged children.

Our contribution will assist them in developing a sound wall.

I also visited Leeswood Under Fives Playgroup, who are based just outside of Mold. Our funding will contribute to the development of an outside space to accommodate a range of activities.

With your help and support, we were able to give each of these charities £2,500, which was very well received and will have a massive impact on their activities.

We also provided assistance to two other causes.

We presented £500 to Cuddles Neonatal Unit, based in Glan Clwyd Hospital, and £150 to support our OSM neighbours, East and West Lancashire, to provide a community Defibrillator at Rixton with Glazebrook Community Centre.

This year, we are looking to support Antur Waunfawr, who have been nominated by Carreg yr Wyddfa Conclave specifically to challenge my pronunciation ability. And Night Owls, a service based in Stockport that is led by one of our members, Worthy Brother Othman Ghosheh.

To support our fundraising, in your welcome pack this morning you have an entry form for our 2026 Virtual Balloon Race. Entry only costs £5 per balloon and gives you the opportunity of being the reigning windbag of the Province.

Please give your entries today to Worthy Brother Barrie Billinge, our Provincial Grand Sword Bearer.

I've known Barrie for a long time, and I'm not sure I trust what he could do with that sword!

The result will be announced at our annual Sunday Lunch in Wrexham on 11 October.

Finally, Brethren, there are two other friends I must pay a special tribute to.

Worthy Brother Andy Tong has settled in exceedingly well into the challenging role of being my Deputy.

Andy still does that work thing and is very busy in other Masonic activities, and will shortly be appointed as Provincial Senior Warden in the Craft Province of Cheshire. Andy, congratulations on your forthcoming appointment, and I trust you will lead an influx of Craft members into our Order.

I must also thank Worthy Brother Alan Harrison.

Since taking on the role of Provincial Grand Recorder, myself and Alan have become very close, and I'm becoming very suspicious he knows my foibles far too well!

Alan, without you this Province wouldn't function as well as it does, and I'm delighted we have found you an assistant who can hopefully relieve some of the pressure from your shoulders to allow you to continue to maintain your garden and catch some big fish.

Brethren

I trust that the Almighty Friend of all Friends grants us all the health and strength to continue to enjoy our Freemasonry, especially within the Order of the Secret Monitor.