

Brethren all, especially the Brethren of London.

This is now my 8th opportunity to address you as PGM, an Office I have now had the privilege to hold for exactly 7 years. Traditionally it's my opportunity to say a number of thank you's; to recap on some of the significant moments of the past masonic season; and to spend a little time in looking forward to what might lie ahead in the coming 12 months. So I will make no apologies for beginning with my several thank you's. Please be very aware that I am conscious of the honour conferred on this ex-pat Scot, to sit in this splendid Chair, in this beautiful Temple, in this magnificent building, which represents the very heart and soul of English, if not International, Freemasonry. I only have this job because of the support, friendship and regard I receive from so many of you here; plus a considerable number who are unable to attend today. It is a pleasure to be able to work with so many talented and dedicated Mark and RAM brethren. The hard work and commitment displayed, in particular by W. Bro. Kevin Hendle and his Secretariat team, cannot be overstated; and you the Brethren of London owe Kevin, his predecessors and their Teams a huge debt of gratitude for managing and supervising what I can only describe has become a brilliantly well managed Masonic empire. 109 Mark lodges; 88 RAM lodges; 5,200 Mark and RAM memberships, over 300 registrations annually for newly Advanced, Elevated and Joining Brethren etc etc. This meeting alone has nearly 600 in this Temple and a dining contingent of some 400 hungry mouths to feed in the Connaught Rooms later this afternoon.

Can I ask Kevin to stand, take a bow and allow all of us present to acknowledge you for continuing to underpin the success, that is the Mark Province of London.

The ceremonial team under Steve Roberts is also to be congratulated. Not only for the successful execution of today's ceremony but for all its work during the year - the Annual RAM Assembly, when they had 40 Provincial RAM Grand Rank recipients to muster and present; in excess of 100 Official Delegations to organize and preside over throughout every month of the year; Restoration and Consecration ceremonies - more of which later; and today with a full agenda of ceremonial, including marshalling 250 Brethren in 7 Processions and the investiture of 150 Provincial Ranks. Steve, please can you take a bow on behalf of your large team, to allow everyone to show their appreciation of your work.

There are also legions of others who work and contribute to the well running of the Province, so do please accept my grateful thanks on behalf of us all.

To those Provincial Officers demitting office today, those continuing in Office and those newly appointed, I offer my thanks and congratulations. Your hard work is really appreciated; but I regret to say it will be continuing for a time yet!

This great London machine needs continuous feeding and its wheels need constant oiling! There will be some changes needed this year and I will be calling upon you for further support and input. I am confident that you will rise to the challenge.

And challenges there have been and which have been met this year on several fronts - not the least on the charity aspects of our Mark Masonry. Following on from the new Charity Stewards' Lodge's Cabby Shelter Appeal in 2024 which raised £25,000; the Sky Jump in 2025 which raised £12,500 and which sponsored the highly successful PSA testing at Mark Masons' Hall in February this year – brilliantly managed by Stacy Harman and Brian McCormack, we had this June's Abseil challenge when Jon Wallis, Brian McCormack, Peter Maelstrom and Simon Dodd threw themselves off the highest abseiling structure in Europe. This has proved to be another highly successful Appeal which has touched the

hearts and wallets of so many of you. I can reveal today that that brave venture has so far raised £25,000 and in fact the Appeal is still open to lodges and individuals who would like to contribute.

Alongside all of our structured charitable giving, London individuals continue to donate to the MBF in various ways. "Encouraged" by my predecessor R.W. Bro. David Ashbolt, London brethren alone have contributed over £45,000 to the current Hants & IOW Festival.

This has been done through the purchase of lapel badges (for which the 2027 version is on sale from today), Festival Stewards breast jewels, Grand Master's Keystone Fund jewels and individuals' regular and lump sum donations. These of course culminate in the awarding of MBF collarettes, many of which are on proud display today by scores of you. Those collarettes are generally presented at Lodge meetings; and I have to say Brethren that such is the level of generosity shown by you all that my Executive and I are hard pressed to keep up with the administration and presentation requirements of so many collarettes. But keep up your good work, Brethren. The Chains don't mind that aspect of their duties! As an aside I can also advise that contributions to date towards London's MBF Festival amount to some £300,000. That Festival however is not due to take place until 2039; and whilst I would like to say that I will be attending that Festival celebration, despite rumours circulating to the contrary, I will not be the PGM in that far off year!

So what else have we been getting up to in this quiet backwater of Freemasonry. Well, as hinted at in my address last July, negotiations with the Atholl Craft Association came to a successful climax last month, when I consecrated the new Atholl Lodge of MMM. A unit which is surely bound to become one of the most important and influential Lodges in our Province. It has as its Primus Master R.W. Bro. Sir David Wootton, who is already a member of our Locomotion Lodge. Sir David as a former Lord Mayor of London has an important Livery function this afternoon, but he will be joining us for dinner later.

In March this year Imperial Lodge of Mark Master Masons Advanced another high-profile brother - Warren Duke the R.W. Metropolitan Grand Master. He is with us today as previously introduced. Brethren, we are indeed honoured to be able to count such distinguished Freemasons amongst our London membership, a fact which serves to illustrate the strong bonds which exist between our London Craft and the Companion Orders.

Other significant events during the year have included London hosting the Grand Master's Lodge of Instruction Annual Festival. An interesting event when I had to swap the Preceptor's hat for that of the President of the Festival. London Brethren have traditionally formed the backbone of the membership of the Grand Master's Lofl, which pays real dividends, as the number of times its individual members attend Lodge meetings to fill offices, which the lodges' regular officers are unable (or unwilling) to discharge themselves. It would be very true to state that a number of our candidates present today have received their ceremonies of Advancement and Elevation at the hands of the Grand Master's Lofl team. At a recent meeting of Brixton Lodge when just such a situation prevailed, we were even honoured by the presence of the Grand Master and his Deputy from the Mark Grand Lodge of Estonia, who were there to observe, as they are keen to establish their own version of a Grand Master's Lofl.

Standard of ceremony remains one of my great priorities, Brethren. We need to give our candidates a memorable experience of their Advancement, so attendance at Lofl, memorising as much of the ritual as possible, or seeking assistance from those who can, are paramount elements of our Lodge meetings. Surely Brethren if we meet only to discharge routine business and donate money to charity, we become nothing more than a benevolent dining institution! Freemasonry is more than that, especially when we have the Magic of the Mark to reveal to our candidates - not forgetting the colourful splendour of the Elevation ceremony too.

The Restoration of the Mahajan Lodge in June meant that we have established a little corner of Romania in London. About to be renamed Carpathia Lodge it consists of Romanian speakers in the UK and as it will be working in the Romanian language it joins the ranks of those other London units working in their respective mother tongues – French, Italian and Turkish.

Today we have welcomed 60 of our 140 newly advanced Brethren into our Annual Meeting. I promised you something special recently when I issued my invitation for you to attend. So when you go back to your Craft lodges and Chapters after today, you must tell your colleagues that you were led into Grand Temple by your own pipe band! Notwithstanding Scotland's performance at the FIFA World Cup last month, I hope you were impressed.

Your presence at our Annual Meeting is such an important one. I am hopeful too that you will all feel able to wear, with great pride, the special lapel badge my Deputy and I presented you with earlier. Brethren of London, these are our newest members and our hopes for the future. They include some 20 from Denmark – recruited in an exercise led by W. Bros. Costa Trizis and Stacy Harman - and who have joined Southwark Lodge number 22. Shortly we hope to welcome a number of French brethren into Ubique Lodge and also a number of Icelanders into Foundation Lodge. Seven of our new Advancers present are still “baby” Mark Master Masons, as it’s only some 16 hours since their Advancement. So could I ask to stand up please, Brothers.

Paul Jeffrey

Lee Knight

Christian Ingersley

Jan Jakobsen

Steffen Christensen

Victor Christiansenn

Esben Klidt

and in fact will all our newly advanced Brethren please stand and take a bow.

Brethren, those numbers are visible evidence of your recruitment efforts. Well done and congratulations to you all on that front.

And now a few announcements for the coming year. Our Provincial Officers’ Mess is 30 years old. So on 14 September we are holding a special black-tie dinner to celebrate. The following month, there will be an exciting new social event for brethren, partners and family. A Halloween Party, on Saturday 24 October 2026 here at Freemasons’ Hall, in the Gallery Suite. Entertainment will be provided by our very own Stacy Harman and his band. The Burns Weekend at Bournemouth will move back a week to 15 January 2027, so all of you who have always wanted to come, but had significant masonic commitments early in the New Year, will have no excuse. The event is normally sold out anyhow but for that function, as for all the others, check the Provincial website, which has all the information you could possibly need. As does your Order of Proceedings and the various Reports contained therein.

Brethren, in this “short” Address I have only been able to give you a glimpse of a few aspects past and present in our Province. For the sake of all your comforts I need to reach a conclusion soon - especially for my fellow PGMs who will have been timing the length of this speech. To them, I say thank you for the hospitality shown to London at your own Annual Meetings; and my huge thanks to everyone for your support and attendance today. Sadly there is not time to mention everyone who helps keep the wheels on this Province, but you know who you are – and you have my most grateful and humble thanks for all that you do!

This has been, as usual, a busy year for London and in the words of Winston Churchill, I will end by saying that “ we may allow ourselves a brief period of respite” to recharge our batteries and to be ready for another year of exciting and challenging Mark Masonry. Until we meet again, may the GOoTU have you all in His good keeping