



**Address of the Pro Grand Master of the
Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons
M.W.Bro. Raymond John Smith
Tuesday, 12 September 2017**

Brethren, a very warm welcome to this September Communication of Mark Grand Lodge, the first of the new Masonic Season. I hope everyone has enjoyed the on/off English summer and for some, but maybe not all, a short break from masonic meetings when perhaps the garden or DIY took priority.

My most important duty today is to bring the apology of the Most Worshipful Grand Master, His Royal Highness Prince Michael of Kent, for his absence today. He has an incredibly busy schedule with numerous commitments and official engagements and today is no exception. He has asked that his best wishes be communicated to you, he greatly enjoyed the June investiture meeting and hopes the busy year ahead proves to be another successful and enjoyable one.

Following that investiture meeting our Grand Master wrote to the Grand Secretary expressing his pleasure at the success of the meeting, the impressive numbers attending with an amazing number of visitors many from overseas. It was indeed a very special day for all of us but more particularly for those receiving appointments or promotions.

The June meeting of Grand Lodge had hardly passed and the Mark Benevolent Fund Anniversary Festival was upon us on Saturday 8 July at Trunkwell House in Reading, under the Presidency of R.W.Bro. Richard Olliver, Provincial Grand Master for Berkshire. A Province of 19 Mark Lodges and 9 Royal Ark Mariner Lodges who, with the support of other Provinces and Districts, raised a magnificent festival total of £666,666. A truly remarkable achievement.

I am certain we all thank the members of the Province of Berkshire for their generosity and their Provincial Grand Master and his festival committee for their ingenuity and fine leadership.

The festival next year will celebrate 150 years since the formation of the Mark Benevolent Fund by Canon Portal in 1868. It will take place on Saturday, 7 July 2018 at the County Showground in Lincoln under the Presidency of R.W.Bro. Revd Trevor Walker, the Provincial Grand Master for Lincolnshire. It will, I am certain, be a most memorable occasion.

150 years of charitable support for members in distress and grants to worthy causes is indeed something to be proud of and to celebrate. In addition to the festival several other events are already being planned to mark this significant achievement. Whilst details are being finalised I am able to tell

you that on 30 January 2018 we will inaugurate the Canon Portal Memorial Lecture – a bi-annual event where a lecture will be delivered on a topic with a charitable theme.

To round off our 150th celebrations on 15 September 2018 next year our Most Worshipful Grand Master will be present at a thanksgiving service to be held in Lincoln's Inn chapel.

The outstanding success of the Mark Benevolent Fund Charity Walk has been well reported and Provincial Grand Masters and other members of Provincial Executives who bravely, if a little naively, took part in the walk, will be pleased to know that it is not intended to repeat it next year.

However the M.B.F. Trustees have decided that the proceeds of the walk, some £437,934, will be utilised to support the Nationwide Association of Blood Bikes. Work is still going on to identify what vehicles are required and their most suitable locations and we expect to make an announcement before the end of this year about the full extent of the support we will be providing to this charity.

The activities of the Mark Benevolent Fund have increased awareness of the assistance it gives to individual Brethren and to worthy causes. It has become clear that to educate our Brethren about the fund and, in particular, the ways in which support can be obtained, additional resource is necessary. As part of the restructuring of the administration at Mark Masons' Hall the Grand Secretary has appointed W.Bro. Darren Coleman, P.G.A.D.C., to a newly created post of Charities Manager with a specific brief to implement a proactive educational programme. I hope you will agree, Brethren, that this sharpened focus on sharing news of the M.B.F. is a welcome development.

The most recent M.B.F. newsletter distributed electronically via Lodge Secretaries, detailed the huge difference the M.B.F. grant to the St Oswald's hospice in Newcastle-upon-Tyne for a new kitchen has made to the lives of both the residents and staff.

We have heard first hand from Mr Paul Barrett in his address to us of another benefit to the community that a grant from the Mark Benevolent Fund has had. Brethren, we should all be very proud of your generosity which enables this work to continue and for that I thank you very much indeed.

Continuing on the charity theme Brethren, on 1st July, I was privileged to be present at Armoury House, home of the Honourable Artillery Company, to witness the inauguration of our renewed partnership with St John Ambulance. You will recall that earlier this year the M.B.F. announced a major grant of over £3 million pounds to St John to fund the cost of 52 new vehicles to replace those purchased by the fund some 17 years ago.

The handover event was a great showcase for the work of the M.B.F. and was graced by the presence of H.R.H. the Duke of Gloucester, Grand Prior of St John who received the keys to the first two vehicles from our Grand Master H.R.H. Prince Michael of Kent. I am delighted to say that those first two vehicles are now in service in the Provinces of Cheshire and East Lancashire.

Further news on the handover of the remaining 50 vehicles will be communicated to you soon.

The GLMMM website has a critical role to play in sharing information about all the orders administered from Mark Masons' Hall as well as supporting the administration of Districts, Provinces and Lodges. I am delighted to announce that work is now underway to design and build a cutting edge new website serving all orders with an expected launch date of December. This website is part of a new communication strategy also encompassing social media contact and delivery of more efficient administration processes.

Provincial Grand Secretaries and Lodge Secretaries will be delighted to know that after some 18 months of development work installation returns will be available via Keystone Online from October. This roll out signals another step forward in the development of Keystone as a single, usable dynamic membership data base. More detailed information about the roll out will be cascaded out to Provincial Grand Secretaries in the coming weeks.

This masonic year will be a busy one, indeed it has already been a busy one. I have been privileged to have installed R.W.Bro. Gareth Hicks as Provincial Grand Master for Dyfed and R.W.Bro. Robert Stokes as Provincial Grand Master for Northamptonshire and Huntingdonshire. Last weekend, once again supported by the very hard working Grand Lodge team, it was a delight to install R.W.Bro. Cornelis van Putten as District Grand Master for the Netherlands. I am delighted that two of those three Brethren are here today. I also wish to place on record the appreciation of us all for the dedication and commitment of the two retiring Provincial Grand Masters and the one retiring District Grand Master. All three have been personal friends, they still have much to contribute and I know their wise counsel will be readily given if needed and I very much hope to see them here at meetings of Grand Lodge in the future.

It was also an enormous pleasure and privilege to attend the centenary celebrations of the District of Singapore whose generous hospitality and warmth of welcome I shall long remember. Those celebrations were well supported by the District of Hong Kong and several Provinces from the UK.

The Sesqui-centenary of the Province of Cornwall will be celebrated in October and I, together with the immediate past Pro Grand Master, will be there representing Grand Lodge. As always in Cornwall I am certain it will be a wonderful occasion.

On the domestic front the summer recess has seen significant refurbishment work taking place at 86 St James's Street to further enhance our headquarters. The work brings to an end the current 5 year building maintenance programme which has delivered notable improvements to the facilities available to all who visit and use the premises.

It is now my pleasure to welcome our distinguished visitors and guests and would ask you to hold your applause until I have finished all the announcements. Firstly those new leaders in our Order:
R.W.Bro. Robert Stokes, Provincial Grand Master for Northamptonshire and Huntingdonshire and
R.W.Bro. Cornelis van Putten, District Grand Master for The Netherlands
Welcome to you both on your first visit to Grand Lodge in your new capacity.

On your behalf I welcome the heads of our other orders:

R.W.Bro. Graham Flight, P.G.J.W., Grand Sovereign of the Grand Conclave of the Red Cross of Constantine;

R.W.Bro. Kessick Jones, P.G.J.W., Grand Master of the Grand Council of the Royal and Select Masters;

R.W.Bro. Thomas Jackson, P.G.J.W., Grand Master of the Allied Masonic Degrees;

R.W.Bro. Andrew Sweeney, P.G.J.W., Grand Summus of the Grand Senatus of the Order of the Scarlet Cord;

R.W.Bro. Michael Herbert, Past Deputy Grand Master, Grand Master of the Grand Priory of the Knights Beneficent of the Holy City and

V.W.Bro. John Paternoster, P.G.M.O., Supreme Magus of the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia.

We also have the great pleasure of having with us

R.W.Bro. Alan Englefield, our Grand Senior Warden, Sovereign Grand Commander of the Ancient and Accepted Rite
and R.W.Bro. Sir Frederick Crawford, *DL*, P.G.S.W., Lieutenant Grand Commander of the Ancient and Accepted Rite.

I am certain we are also pleased to have three of our Past Pro Grand Masters with us, Most Worshipful Brothers John Hale, Benjamin Addy and Richard Wallis, *JP*.

From our own Constitution, I now welcome:

From Belgium:

the District Grand Master, R.W.Bro. John Verbist accompanied by:

V.W.Bro. Francis Clarembaux

W.Bro. Gilbert Denys

W.Bro. George Butler

W.Bro. Michael Fahey

W.Bro. Kenneth Howard

From Germany:

the District Grand Master: R.W.Bro. Michael Cooper accompanied by:

W.Bro. Schoene

W.Bro. J Harris

W.Bro. Allan Morecroft

From Hong Kong:

W.Bro. Patrick Purnell-Edwards, Deputy District Grand Master, accompanied by:

V.W.Bro. David Fok

W.Bro. Hak Tsoi

W.Bro. Robert Bull

W.Bro. Vivian Lee

From Singapore:

W.Bro. David Thomas, and

W.Bro. Derek Lo who this year is our active Assistant Sword Bearer and who was in Singapore a few weeks ago was called upon to act as my Grand Sword Bearer. A special moment for us both.

From South and East Caribbean

R.W.Bro. Stephen Cobham, District Grand Master

Our thoughts are with your District following last week's hurricane and as you are aware the Mark Benevolent Fund stands by to assist our members in your District if help is required. R.W.Bro. Stephen is also accompanied by R.W.Bro. Derek Hugh, Past District Grand Master.

From New Zealand

W.Bro. Allan Macdonald, P.A.G.D.C.

Brethren, can we now show our appreciation and delight at having these Brethren with us today.

Brethren, this is one our shortest meetings, and I, like I am sure all of you, wish to go from labour to refreshment so I shall conclude by thanking you for your attendance, take back to your Provinces the news I have communicated to you in this address, and I hope we will all be together again at the Royal Ark Mariner investiture on Tuesday 12 December.