

## **MEGS Addresses the Companions**

Companions, it is my great pleasure to welcome you all here today on the occasion of our Annual Provincial Convocation. For a number of reasons, the format has been changed from last year and we will be dining after the Convocation has ended. I hope that you all find this to be acceptable, and that you will enjoy the late lunch which follows.

I have already greeted our honoured guests from both our neighbouring Provinces and within the Province of Hampshire and Isle of Wight. It has been our privilege and pleasure to visit many of our neighbouring Provinces over the last twelve months, where we are always received with the warmest of welcomes and generous hospitality. We are therefore delighted to reciprocate today and hope that you have enjoyed our company as much as we have enjoyed yours.

This year a number of Grand Superintendents from our neighbouring Provinces have stood down from office or will be standing down before the end of the year. Without exception, they are all good friends of this Province whom I personally have had the pleasure of knowing for many years. There will always be a warm welcome for them within this Province whenever they choose to come and visit us.

Once again, I congratulate all those Companions that I have had the privilege and pleasure of either appointing or promoting in Provincial Grand Chapter today. As is always the case Companions, your appointments and promotions not only recognise the service that you have already given to Royal Arch Masonry in general, and to this Province in particular, but also the support and dedication that I am sure you will continue to give throughout the coming years. I know that I can rely on you all.

Those of you who were present at Supreme Grand Chapter in London on 26<sup>th</sup> April will have seen five Companions from this Province being invested as Grand Officers by the Most Excellent Pro. First Grand Principal Peter Lowndes and two Companions being promoted in Supreme Grand Chapter. They are all appointments richly deserved, and I offer my heartiest congratulations to each of the recipients.

Today, a number of Companions are standing down from office. E. Comp. David Gosney is standing down as Group Representative for the Chapters meeting in the Portsmouth area and it has been my pleasure to install him today as Third Provincial Grand Principal. Also E. Comp. Phil Gooch is standing down as Group Representative for the Chapters meeting in the Cosham Area and has given valuable service to the Province. I thank them both for their hard work and commitment to the Royal Arch in this Province.

E. Comp Bob Collins is standing down from office having completed three very successful years as Provincial Grand Charity Steward. Bob has carried out his duties diligently and with great enthusiasm and has been instrumental in raising substantial sums of money for the Charities that the Province has been supporting. I wish him a long and well-deserved rest and thank him for his support and dedication.

E. Comp. Tony Green also stands down today from the office of Assistant Provincial Grand Scribe Ezra. He has given unstinting support to the Provincial Grand Scribe Ezra and his deputy for a number of years and can always be relied upon to discharge his duties efficiently and expeditiously. His service to the Province has been invaluable, and I thank him most sincerely.

Last but certainly by no means least E. Comp. David Workman has today completed a very successful year as Third Provincial Grand Principal. He has been extremely well received both throughout the Province and beyond and I know that his wit and sense of humour have endeared him to the Companions. He has been a constant source of support to myself, my deputy, and the Provincial Executive, and I will continue to rely on his wise counsel over the coming years. I wish him every success, good health, and happiness for the future.

Under the watchful eye of E. Comp. David Wood, a number of "Dine a Master Mason" evenings have taken place this year at different venues within the Province. Once again, they have proved to be a very valuable recruiting tool. Each evening has been well attended and as a result a goodly number of Master Masons have been exalted into the Royal Arch. I am most grateful to the team from the Provincial Grand Stewards Chapter who have delivered their "Why the Royal Arch" presentation on each occasion.

It is my intention to continue holding such evenings in the coming year, and I rely very much on you Companions to support them. We are of course all Craft Masons and we only have to look around our Craft Lodges to see just how many of the Brethren do not wear the Royal Arch jewel. We are one of the biggest Royal Arch Provinces in the country, but yet only around thirty three percent of our Craft brethren have been exalted into the Royal Arch and completed their journey through Pure Antient Masonry. We can do better Companions, and I am confident that with your support, help and determination we will do better. Let us not lose sight of the fact that every Master Mason is a potential Royal Arch Companion.

I want to thank the Royal Arch Representatives in our Craft Lodges for all their hard work and commitment. Every Lodge should of course have a Royal Arch Representative and it will always be the case that some will be more effective than others. Grand Lodge has emphatically stated that the role of a Royal Arch Representative is of the highest importance and is very keen to ensure that the right person is appointed. The Royal Arch Province will always be pleased to assist in the selection process and offer guidance to ensure that the right brother is appointed whenever a Royal Arch Representative stands down. Every Royal Arch Representative should by now have received their lapel pin, but if you have yet to receive yours then I know that my Deputy, E. Comp. Colin Upton, will be pleased to provide one. Wear them with pride Companions and make sure that the brethren of your lodge who are not already Royal Arch Companions are made aware of your appointment, and of your ability to assist them in taking their final step in Pure Antient Masonry.

A first meeting of Royal Arch Representatives on the Isle of Wight took place a few months ago in Ryde, as a pilot scheme. It was well supported by the Royal Arch Representatives on the Island and proved to be both a very useful and informative evening. The exchange of information and views expressed was extremely interesting and enlightening, and I intend to hold further meetings in the coming year.

As you know Companions my chosen charity for this year was the Earl Mountbatten Hospice on the Isle of Wight. The annual charity walk, appropriately entitled The Cowes Canter, took place on 6<sup>th</sup> May at Cowes on the Isle of Wight. The weather was conducive, and my wife and I joined a goodly number of Companions who were accompanied by their partners and friends. Light refreshments were provided and sponsorship money in excess of £1900.00. was raised which helped to boost the Hospice Appeal significantly. I am most grateful to all those Companions who were involved in the arrangements for the walk which made the event so successful and enjoyable.

The subsequent Charity Evening hosted by Asher Barfield Chapter No.35 was very well attended as usual. It was extremely well supported by the Provincial Team, the majority of whom took part in the ceremony. I was overwhelmed by the generosity of the Companions of the Island Chapters who on the evening presented me with cheques and pledges totalling some £14000.00. I'm sure that you will agree Companions that this is nothing short of magnificent and quite remarkable.

Prior to the Charity Evening and through your unstinting generosity Companions the Hospice had already received a sum in excess of £24,000.000, The moneys so generously donated by the Companions of the Island have been added and I intend to top the final figure up to £40,000.00. We also hope to have the opportunity of visiting the Hospice soon to see for ourselves at first hand just how the money has been spent in providing care and equipment and the vital services that the patients of the Hospice require.

My chosen charity for the coming year is Prostate Cancer UK. Prostate Cancer is on the increase, and will touch most, if not all of us, either directly or indirectly, at some period in our lifetime. Many of us here today are suffering or have suffered from Prostate cancer or know of someone who is or has suffered from it. Although incredible advances in technology have been made in recent years, further research and development is essential to continue the fight against the disease. Such research and development is costly, and the Charity is heavily reliant on funds raised and donated from within the private sector. I am therefore sure Companions that this appeal will receive your full support and that you will give generously to it throughout the coming year as you have always done in the past. I am happy that the lapel

pin with which many of you are already familiar should be worn at Royal Arch Convocations in the Province throughout the appeal period.

As is always the case Companions, a lot of hard work has been carried out both in front of house and behind the scenes in preparation and readiness for today's Annual Convocation. The Provincial Grand Scribe Ezra, E. Comp. Tony Tykocki, ably assisted by his deputy E. Comp. Barry Wild and his Assistant E. Comp. Tony Green, have been heavily involved for several months in preparing the essential paperwork for the Convocation and in particular for the investiture. I am most grateful to each of them.

The support and dedication of the Companions of the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Provincial Grand Steward's Chapter is again in evidence today. Year on year, and today under the watchful eye of their Director of Ceremonies E. Comp. Barry Young, they willingly give up their time to assist in the preparation of the hall for this Convocation, to meet and greet our distinguished guests from both our neighbouring Provinces and our own Province, to monitor the car parking, to conduct and accompany those Companions who have received Provincial honours, and generally assist in the clearing and tidying up after the Convocation has ended. A hearty thank you to each and every one of you.

Many thanks also to my Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies, E. Comp. Chris Davis, and his very able team of deputies and assistants. They never fail to go that extra mile to ensure that the Annual Convocation runs smoothly and efficiently. Today has certainly been no exception. Their commitment and dedication to the Royal Arch in this Province is second to none, and it is reassuring to know that I can always rely upon them to rise to the occasion.

Thanks also to E. Comp. Colin Brown who once again has accepted responsibility for all the dining arrangements and has discharged his duties both efficiently and in an exemplary manner.

I also thank the catering and banqueting staff of the Novotel Hotel for their guidance, cooperation and assistance. After the Annual Convocation last year a number of teething problems and issues became apparent and they have now been satisfactorily resolved. The feedback from last year, and in particular from our honoured guests from our neighbouring Provinces, was most favourable and hopefully the Royal Arch in this Province has found a new home at which to hold the Annual Convocations over the coming years.

Finally, my sincere thanks to my Provincial Grand Janitor E. Comp. David Taylor, and his brother E. Comp. Paul Taylor. For a number of years this small and dedicated team has accepted responsibility for the transportation of the furniture, carpet and other essential equipment required for the Annual Convocation, to and from the location. They arrive just after the crack of dawn and don't depart until most of us are well on our journey home. Their dedication and devotion to the Royal Arch is evident, and I am most grateful and appreciative of everything that they do.

I thank you all for your attention and for attending in such goodly numbers, and I hope that you will now enjoy a very happy, pleasant and restful summer recess. I look forward with eager anticipation to the start of the new Royal Arch season within this great Province and in particular to the pleasure of your company. Have a safe and uneventful journey home and may the True and Living G-d Most High speed you on your way.