

**Address by the Provincial Grand Master
at the Meeting of Three Counties Lodge
on Monday 26th October 2015**

Brethren, I am sure that we have all enjoyed the ceremony of the Installation of V W Bro Richard Davis into the Chair of this Lodge and I congratulate W Bro John Manby on a fine piece of work. Most of you will know Richard but just in case, I will tell you that he has been a Freemason for over 40 years and is currently District Grand Prefect of the Order of the Allied Masonic Degrees. He also holds the position of Deputy Provincial Grand Master in the Craft Province of Nottinghamshire which cements the already excellent relationship that we have with that Province. As he lives in Leicestershire it also further helps our strong relationship with Leicester & Rutland.

It is the tradition of this Lodge that the Master is the head of an order that practices in the Province, but I am now about to deviate from that tradition. I am very pleased to announce that in October of next year VW Richard Davis will install W Bro Norman Pope as Master. Norman has given outstanding service to this Province both as secretary and more recently as an APGM and I feel that being Master of this very prestigious Lodge will show how much we appreciate what he has done.

I would also welcome our newly elected joining members. W Bro David Burton is very well known to all of you as an Assistant Provincial Grand Master and he has commenced his duties very well indeed. We also welcome W Bro Mike Caseman-Jones who has also settled very well into his role as Provincial Grand Secretary. And finally W Bro Michael Coleman who has served the Holy Royal Arch for a number of years as Third Principal, Second Principal and, since last June, as Deputy Grand Superintendent. I welcome all of you to this special Lodge.

I would now talk about the current situation with this building at Sheaf Close. We are now in our third year of occupation and all is well. We have produced surpluses in our accounts and are becoming financially secure. We still own the land at the side of the dining room and there has been considerable progress with regard to its disposal. Plans have been drawn up and permission sought for a development of a nursing home. The disposal, when it transpires, will extinguish all of our debt and probably leave a reasonable surplus. This will secure the future of Masonic premises in Northampton for the foreseeable future.

It should also be noted that there has been significant progress with regard to Masonic premises at Huntingdon. A sale has been negotiated and finalised for the sale of the building in the High Street with the successful purchase of alternative accommodation at Sovereign Court, Huntingdon. Work on this building is now underway and occupation is expected in January next year. I offer my sincere congratulations to W Bro John Benson and all of his dedicated team.

My request for support for the Provincial Building Fund has been very well received by the lodges and there is now a fund well in excess of £50,000 that is available for loans to assist any centre with maintenance and development costs.

The success of our various building developments has not gone unnoticed by Grand Lodge or by other Provinces. The team that master-minded the Sheaf Close development, in particular W Bro Barry Howard, is assisting in many other areas and I am proud that Northamptonshire and Huntingdonshire are now recognised as a Province that is firmly in charge of its destiny.

I do not need remind you that 2017 will mark the Tercentenary of Freemasonry as we know it. Our Tercentenary team, with representation from around the Province, has been working very hard and have scheduled three events. These are a visit to Grand Lodge in March 2017 during which we will conduct a ceremony in the Grand Temple followed by dinner with our wives and partners. On 11th June 2017 there will be a service in Peterborough Cathedral preceded by a parade through the streets with members wearing their Masonic regalia. The third event will be a banquet in Kettering on 21st October 2017. I do not want any other events apart from these three and I must stress that there will be no fund-raising from these events. I believe that we demand much support from our brethren through lodge raffles, contributions to Provincial Grand Charity and, of course, during our Festivals so this time we will seek for nothing more than to cover any costs.

Let me also mention membership. We continue to introduce quality men into our Order with almost every one of our 93 lodges working ceremonies. It is so important that, once we have introduced these men, we ensure that they enjoy what we are offering and thus retain their membership. There is such important work to be carried out by our Mentoring Officers and we all need to give them our support. We have some remarkable buildings in our Province and they will continue to require maintenance in coming years and the more of us there are the easier will that maintenance be. Grand Lodge will shortly be issuing a document called 'The Journey of a Freemason' – 'An introduction to the Members' Pathway' - which deals with recruitment and retention. A lot of work has gone into this and I must say that I like a lot of what is being said and suggested. The matter is to be discussed at the PGM's Forum to be held on 4 November and it is likely to progress from there. I will, of course, keep you informed of that progress.

Brethren, before I draw to a close I would like to make an announcement about the future management of this Province. I have now been your Provincial Grand Master for just over four years and I have been supported admirably by the executive team. However, it is always necessary to look ahead and plan the future. I can now inform you that at Provincial Grand Lodge next May, W Bro Jim Boughton will retire from the role of Assistant Provincial Grand Master. I will clearly say a few words about him at the Provincial Meeting, but right now I would like to say that Jim has proved to be an inspired choice as APGM and has carried out his duties impeccably. I must also announce the retirement of W Bro Charles Bennett as Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies. I consider Charles to be one of the best DC's around and many Provinces would welcome someone with his abilities. However, he has carried out those duties for more than five years and I feel that we must move on. Not

wishing to lose his invaluable contribution to the running of this Province I am delighted to announce that I am to appoint him as Assistant Provincial Grand Master in May next year. Those of you who are still listening to me will have worked out that I shall need to appoint a Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies. That person will be W Bro Dale Gilbert who has proved outstanding as a Deputy DC.

The rest of the executive will remain the same, that is W Bro Trevor Boswell as Deputy PGM, W Bro David Burton as Assistant PGM and W Bro Mike Caseman-Jones as Secretary.

That, brethren, completes the team and it also completes my address. I thank you all for attending this evening and look forward to your continued support throughout this season.