

**President's Address**

Brethren,

Firstly, may I welcome you all here this evening. I trust that you have dined well and have enjoyed each other's company.

Brethren - I have quite a lot to talk to you about this evening. My apologies if this takes a little longer than you would like, but there are some important matters upon which I need to update you – and some important announcements which I need to make.

At the meeting of the Club in March last year I had the pleasure of launching the Middlesex 2020 Festival in aid of the RMTGB. I am certain that, through the media of the web-site and your Lodge Charity Stewards, you will all have been kept up to date with the progress of the Festival and will be aware of – and hopefully involved in – the many fund raising events which have been arranged by our Lodges and other organisations within the Province.

At the Installation meetings of the Masters Lodges during February and March this year I have been able to update you on the progress of the Festival, and you will know that I have been so incredibly proud of the generosity which you have all shown in supporting the Festival.

I am now able to tell you that, in the year since I launched the Festival, we have reached the wonderful total of £1,500,000. – One Million Five Hundred Thousand Pounds !!

Brethren – this is stunning – you should all be very proud – your generosity is amazing – Middlesex is truly a wonderful Province.

But, Brethren, we still have a way to go and I know that you will all continue your efforts to achieve a fantastic total by the end of the Festival in 2020.

“A man never stands so tall as when he kneels to help a child”

Brethren – after 12 months Middlesex is standing tall – and proudly reaching for the sky.

I am delighted that 4 of our Lodges have already achieved Grand Patron status – and one Lodge, impressively, has reached Platinum Grand Patron status.

I am very much looking forward to presenting certificates to those Lodges, on behalf of the RW Provincial Grand Master, at the Provincial meeting on the 10<sup>th</sup> May.

Brethren – a full list of Lodge and Chapter honorifics can be found on the Festival web-site. Take a look at it – it's very impressive.

If your Lodge or Chapter doesn't appear yet then I'm sure you will make certain that you are up there with the rest very soon.

Time does not permit me to talk about all of the events planned for the Festival in the coming year, but I do urge you all to check out both the Festival and the Provincial web-sites and please, Brethren, take an active role in supporting the Festival in whatever way you can.

I do, however, want to mention the continuing work of the MGFF from whom we received a presentation at our last Club meeting.

The Province of Middlesex is extremely fortunate to have such a wonderful charitable organisation run by totally enthusiastic, committed and hardworking Brethren organising fantastic social events and raising enormous amounts of money for our Charities.

Brethren – these guys are truly wonderful, and work incredibly hard. Seriously Brethren – they work incredibly hard.

Sadly, I am not convinced that we all support them as much as we ought – and I hope that we can put that right.

If you don't feel able to get to one of the MGFF events then please – at the very least - support the MGFF 2016 Grand Draw. On your tables you will see a copy of the Charity Steward Festival News which tells you how to support the draw whilst at the same time improving the honorific status of your Lodge. £5 – that's all it costs Brethren – please – do it – and get your Lodge to do it – and show your support to these guys who do so much for us.

Brethren – you will all now be aware that 2017 marks the tercentenary of the formation of the United Grand Lodge.

Events in celebration of the tercentenary are being planned by Grand Lodge, and by all of the Provinces.

Grand Lodge's main celebratory event is to be held at the Royal Albert Hall on the 31<sup>st</sup> October 2017, followed by a dinner at Battersea Evolution.

It is anticipated that Provinces will be allocated tickets for the Royal Albert Hall event on the basis of 1 ticket for every 70 members of the Province. Middlesex, therefore, should be allocated just shy of 70 tickets.

I have not yet worked out how those tickets should be allocated, but I will keep you all updated on the arrangements and will explain how attendance applications should be made in due course.

The Provinces of Middlesex and Hertfordshire are joining together for a bumper celebratory event at the Girl's School at Rickmansworth on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2017 – and, again, I will arrange for you to be provided with full details of this in due course, both through the Provincial web-site and through your individual Lodge event co-ordinators.

You will understand, Brethren, that the Province will be extremely busy over the next 3-4 years with arrangements for the tercentenary of United Grand Lodge and, most particularly, with our 2020 Festival.

However – I am very mindful that the year 2020 also marks the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the formation of the Craft Province of Middlesex – and we certainly need to make arrangements to celebrate that in suitable style.

I have to be totally honest with you Brethren – as I stand here this evening I have no idea what we should do by way of celebration to mark this important event – except that mark it we most certainly will, and in an unforgettable way.

I am very aware that our existing organisations within the Province are pretty much tied up and committed, not only in organising the tercentenary and the Festival, but also in the general running of the Province on a day to day basis.

The one thing I have decided in respect of our 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, however, is that it would be very appropriate for this to be organised under the auspices of this Club. I cannot think of a more logical arrangement than having the Provincial Grand Officers Club arranging the Province's celebration.

So I am asking Andrew, our Club secretary, to get a team together to discuss potential celebratory ideas, and I am particularly keen that you should all have an opportunity of having an input into this. If you would like to volunteer to help – or to volunteer ideas – then please do contact Andrew.

We have some time to go to get this sorted and “on the road”, but the difficulty is that it needs not to be in competition with our Festival commitments in 2020 – whilst still being appropriate to the celebration of such a special and important event.

There is another matter I wish to mention about our 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

I’m looking for a volunteer – but I’m looking for a very special volunteer indeed.

You will all be aware that our much loved and sadly departed Brother, Professor Allan Beaver, produced a wonderful book entitled “Middlesex Matters” – a history of the first 125 years of the Province from 1870 to 1995.

I think the book should be updated to cover 150 years; I think we owe it to Professor Allan to ensure that it is updated.

I know that this will be a mammoth task – I suspect that it will be an extremely time consuming and difficult task – but I’m looking for a volunteer. Please come and talk to me if you think you might be the man for the job.

Brethren, I am rapidly approaching the end of my second year as Pro Provincial Grand Master. Strangely – and possibly uniquely – I have never actually presided over the opening of Provincial Grand Lodge, so I am very much looking forward to our Provincial meeting on the 10<sup>th</sup> May.

The fact that the meeting coincides with my darling wife’s birthday is a cross I shall have to bear – but if I appear bruised and battered on the day you will understand the reason.

I look forward very much to investing those Brethren whom the Provincial Grand Master has been pleased to appoint to, and promote in, Provincial Grand Rank this year. If you are one of those Brethren to be appointed or promoted in Provincial Rank then could I ask you all to stand so that we may all express our congratulations to you.

I also wish to take this opportunity to congratulate those Brethren and Royal Arch Companions who have been honoured with appointments or promotions in Grand Rank, and who are to be invested by the MW The Grand Master / The ME The First Grand Principal in April.

I would ask those who are present to stand as I read out your names:

In the Craft the following Brethren receive first appointments:

Stewart Graham - to be appointed to the active rank of Assistant Grand Standard Bearer  
John Eynon – Past Assistant Grand Director of Ceremonies  
Andrew Elliott - Past Assistant Grand Sword Bearer  
Paul Ackland-Snow – Past Assistant Grand Superintendent of Works  
Peter Annett – Past Assistant Grand Standard Bearer, and  
Hansraj Gudka – Past Assistant Grand Standard Bearer

The following Brethren are to be promoted:

Brian Fisher – Past Senior Grand Deacon  
Michael Rolph – Past Junior Grand Deacon  
Adrian Howorth – Past Assistant Grand Director of Ceremonies, and  
John Martin – Past Assistant Grand Director of Ceremonies.  
Graham Redmond is to be re-appointed as Deputy Grand Secretary.

In the Royal Arch the following Companions receive first appointments:  
Nicholas Critchlow – to be appointed to the active rank of Assistant Grand Director of Ceremonies  
Peter De Wolf – Past Grand Standard Bearer  
Martin Kemble – Past Grand Standard Bearer  
Geoffrey Rayner – Past Assistant Grand Director of Ceremonies.  
Michael Higginbotham is to be promoted to Past Grand Standard Bearer.

Brethren – I am sure you will all wish to join with me in congratulating these Brethren and Companions.

Brethren,

Amongst the highlights of our Provincial AGMs in recent years has been the parading of Lodge banners into Provincial Grand Lodge by our newest Master Masons – and the welcoming of Lodge Masters to the meeting.

Many of my fellow Provincial Grand Masters have commented on the wonderful spectacle of the banner procession, and I know that several other Provinces are considering adopting this at their own meetings.

Imitation, Brethren, is the sincerest form of flattery – and in this instance quite rightly so.

It is a terrific spectacle – but its also a huge honour for those Master Masons invited to take part. I know that many of the Brethren who were selected to carry their Lodge banners last year did so with great pride and found the whole experience very exciting and moving.

I'm sure you will understand that a procession such as this entails a lot of organisation – and a lot of hard work by a lot of our Provincial officers.

So – Brethren – permit me to have a gripe. You all know me – you know I like a good moan !

To organise this procession e mails were sent at the beginning of March to 193 Lodge secretaries. The e mails invited them to nominate their Master Masons to parade their Lodge banners.

By the end of March only 74 Lodge secretaries had bothered to reply to the e mail. 119 didn't bother to reply.

At the end of March a reminder was sent. Despite that reminder 68 Lodge secretaries have still not bothered to reply.

You will understand Brethren that, on all sorts of levels, this is extremely frustrating – and I won't labour the point.

But – and it's a great big but – the really frustrating thing – the really worrying thing – is the extent to which the failure of a Lodge secretary to be bothered to answer this request has deprived a young mason in his Lodge of the opportunity of being involved in this terrific event.

We organise these things because we want to give our young guys the chance to be involved – we want to keep them involved. The Lodges want and need to keep the young guys as members. We all complain that our new guys leave after a year or so – and yet so many of us don't seem to be bothered enough to answer a simple e mail to give the young guys an opportunity to be involved.

Brethren – I'm absolutely certain that my gripe does not apply to anyone here this evening, but it must concern you all and I have now doubt that your curiosity may compel you to ask your Lodge secretary if he responded.

The cynic in me suggests that in the future I should just e mail the 193 Lodge secretaries to ask them if they would like any Provincial Appointments or Promotions for any of their Lodge members. I suspect that the response rate might be more impressive.

Brethren – you are all the senior members of the Province – you are all Provincial Grand Officers – please, please, please use your influence in your Lodges to sort these things out.

Gripe over !!

You know Brethren – we get up to some pretty fantastic things as Freemasons in Middlesex. I never cease to be amazed at the kindness, help and charity which our members give and show to others. We don't often make a song and dance about it – much of what we do is unseen by all except the beneficiaries.

I guess I'm in a very privileged position as Pro Provincial Grand Master – I get to find out much more about what goes on in this Province than you might think – and I am incredibly proud of everything you guys do.

Thank you for the support you have all given me over the past two years – and a very special word of thanks to Simon, the Deputy Provincial Grand Master, and to Martyn, the Deputy Grand Superintendent, who are just brilliant.

The administration of a Masonic Province the size of Middlesex is a huge task, and I am very fortunate to have a great executive team to shoulder much of the burden. At the Provincial meeting in May I will, of course, convey my thanks to them more formally but I want to take this opportunity to express a special word of thanks to W. Bro. Chris Connop who will be stepping down in May after serving the Province for the past 5 years as an Assistant Provincial Grand Master.

Chris is representing the Province today at the Installation of the new Provincial Grand Master for Bedfordshire, and is therefore unable to be with us.

But - everybody knows Chris – Chris knows everybody – and Chris has been a wonderful asset to the Province. I will, of course, be more expansive in my thanks to him in May.

Brethren, it gives me great pleasure to announce that the Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master has been pleased to appoint W. Bro. Paul Huggins as an Assistant Provincial Grand Master and I look forward to investing him at the meeting of Provincial Grand Lodge in May. I am sure Brethren that you will wish to join with me in congratulating W. Bro. Paul on his appointment.

You will be aware, Brethren, that W. Bro. Paul has served as Provincial Third Grand Principal in the Royal Arch with great distinction for the last 5 years and I am sure that you will share my confidence in his ability to perform the duties of an Assistant Provincial Grand Master, and my delight at his appointment by the Provincial Grand Master.

As Grand Superintendent in and over the Royal Arch Province of Middlesex I am pleased to announce that I am appointing E. Comp. Mike Karn as Provincial Third Grand Principal in succession to Paul, and I very much look forward to investing Mike in that office at the Royal Arch Provincial meeting in June.

I know, Brethren and Companions, that you will be delighted at Mike's appointment and that you will wish to join with me in congratulating him.

Brethren,

Thank you for your very kind attention this evening, and I now call upon W. Bro. Bill Stanton who will be giving a short presentation entitled “End to End – A challenge on behalf of **the RMTGB**”