

PGO Club – 5th April 2017

Address by the President

Brethren,

Firstly, may I welcome you all here to our new Venue at Brunel University. I trust that you have all dined well and have enjoyed each other's company.

Brethren – I have quite a lot of topics to cover 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.

It's now exactly 2 years since I launched the 2020 Festival in aid of the RMTGB, and I could speak for hours in admiration of the fantastic work which has been undertaken by so many of our Lodges, Organisations and individuals in support of this wonderful cause.

I've mentioned in the past some of the truly incredible feats undertaken by some of our members – Peter Lawrence's Rock Ride – John Lill's innumerable marathon runs – the Masters rides from London to Brighton – the list is endless and seriously impressive.

These guys are our 2020 Heroes.

Time does not permit me to identify and congratulate all those who have championed the cause of the Middlesex Festival so far, but a couple of things have really grabbed my attention and I need to share them with you in case you have missed them.

Did you read about the incredible Brother Martin Burt who climbed Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania to raise £7,000 for the Festival. His wife, Sevinc, also did the climb and raised a similar sum for the Children's Trust, a charity supporting children with brain injuries.

Martin's report on his adventure is a good read, and in a short extract he says "..... Though it was pretty gruelling, we succeeded in reaching Uhuru Peak, the highest point in Africa, 5895 meters above sea level. We have learned a lot

along the way – 2 person tents for example are barely suitable for 1; a sleeping bag can be a substitute for a straight jacket; its not uncool to wear long johns and a hat in bed; chamber pots are still in, fashion – and you only need to climb Kilimanjaro once in your life...!”

Martin Burt – a 2020 Hero.

And how about Bro. Frankie Whelan of Richmond Lodge No. 2032 who starts the Marathon des Sables on Friday.

This is a truly epic challenge which Frankie is embarking on in aid of the 2020 Festival - its rated as the toughest footrace on earth – the stuff of legends. Have a look at the details on the Provincial website and please sign up to support Frankie.

April is a busy month for Frankie – he will run the Marathon des Sables – he will become a father again – and he will be Installed as Master of Richmond Lodge.

Frankie Whelan – a 2020 Hero.

And John Lill and Peter Lawrence – the end2end Challenge – running and riding from John O’Groats to Lands End between the 26 May and 3 June.

You will all, of course, recall Bill Stanton’s presentation about this remarkable challenge at one of our previous meetings, and will have read the article in the recent edition of the Mercury.

Currently Bill, and the other organisers of the challenge, are planning events at Harrow and at Twickenham to see John and Peter off on their way, and to welcome them home at the end. Please keep a close eye on the website for details of these events – and don’t forget to sign up to support Peter and John – 2020 Heroes.

Brethren – please don’t think that your event, fundraiser, efforts have gone unnoticed because I have not referred to them here this evening. The thing is – you have all been so incredible, so generous, so enthusiastic with your support – with your time – with your money – that I cannot possibly cover everything.

But believe me, Brethren, nothing you have done has gone unnoticed.

At the end of February 2017 – less than 2 years into the Festival – the total you have all donated – the total you have all given – is £2,200,000 – Two Million Two Hundred Thousand Pounds.

That's a big cosy figure – let me say it again: Two Million Two Hundred Thousand Pounds.

I am so proud of you – I am so proud of the Province of Middlesex – you are all 2020 Heroes.

A man never stands so tall as when he kneels to help a child. Middlesex is standing tall.

Regular attenders at these PGO Club meetings will have noticed that in every address I deliver to the Club I include what I now refer to as the Pro's Gripe Time.

You only get it twice a year Brethren – the members of the Executive get it far more often – but you are going to get it now.

At our meeting last April I complained that of our 193 Lodge secretaries 68 didn't bother to reply to our e mails inviting them to nominate their new Master Masons to enjoy the honour of parading their Lodge banners at Provincial Grand Lodge.

My frustration was primarily that those secretaries – for whatever reason – were depriving their new Masons of the opportunity to be involved in something really impressive and exciting.

Well Brethren – this year the Lodge secretaries have really excelled themselves. Out of 193 Lodge Secretaries, 111 haven't bothered to reply!!

Seriously guys – what's going on? Do you not want to keep your new members – or is it that you would prefer your young guys to be deprived of these opportunities?

Increasingly, these days, applications for membership come through the various social media platforms. The Province appointed, as Provincial Membership Officer, Nigel Harris-Cooksley of North Harrow Lodge to deal with these membership approaches.

Part of that exercise is to try to ensure that potential candidates are directed towards Lodges that are considered suitable for them. If we are to retain new members it is essential to ensure that they join a Lodge which is right for them.

Nigel and his team have, therefore, been endeavouring to collate Lodge profiles so that we can try and direct the right candidates to the right Lodges.

Requests have been made to all Lodge secretaries to provide fairly straightforward Lodge profiles to us so that we can send the right sort of candidates to you.

We've made these requests to your Lodge secretaries – we've repeated these requests – we continue to make these requests – but nearly 50% of Lodge secretaries haven't bothered to reply.

Seriously guys – what's going on? Do you not want new members?

As I said to you last year, I'm absolutely certain that my gripe does not apply to anyone here this evening, but doesn't this cause you concern and frustration? I am sure – well I hope – that curiosity may persuade you to ask your Lodge secretary if he has responded to any of this.

April 2017 Gripe over!!

Actually Brethren, my 3 years as Pro Provincial Grand Master have brought our black and white chequered pavements into sharp focus for me and I soon came to realise that the gripes and frustrations of the black squares are equally balanced by the joys and excitement of the white ones.

Sometimes things work – sometimes things are nothing short of terrific – those times make everything else fade into insignificance. We should have more white squares!!

The Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies can be seen to wear a frown this evening – well, an unusually gruesome frown – because (in his view) I am clearly wearing the incorrect Masonic tie.

But I'm not – I'm wearing a tie which very clearly represents a white square.

2 years ago I suggested to you that we needed to look at Consecrating new Lodges – new blood – new Life – and on the 16th December last year I had the great pleasure and honour of consecrating The Middlesex Armed Forces Lodge No. 9940.

What a night – what an event – what a terrific success – what about we do a lot more of that Brethren?? What a nice tie!!!

We have 2 or 3 other potential new Lodges on the way – lets get it all going for the future.

Last year I mentioned that the Annual Meeting of Provincial Grand Lodge coincided with my wife's birthday on the 10th May, and I warned you that if I turned up all battered and bruised then you would understand the reason why.

Little did I realise that a week after this Club meeting last year it would be the National Health Service which got me all battered and bruised, but I was delighted and relieved that I was able to get to the meeting in one piece to invest all of our new Provincial Grand officers on behalf of the RW Provincial Grand Master.

I do hope that all those that I had the pleasure of investing last year have enjoyed their office, and I enjoin you all to aim for higher things to come.

This year, as you know, Provincial Grand Lodge will be held at Great Queen Street on the 9th May and I do hope that I will see as many of you there as possible either to receive your own promotions, or to support those Brethren in your Lodges who are to be honoured with appointments or promotions.

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 I would ask you to stand please 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 in April by the MW The Grand Master / The ME The First Grand Principal.

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

In the Craft the following Brethren are to receive first appointments:

Graham Pattenden – to be appointed to the active rank of Assistant Grand Sword Bearer

Howard Walters – PAGDC

John Briggs – PAGSuptWks

Steve Heynes – PGStB

Leonard Sullivan – PGStB

And the following Brethren are to be promoted:

Jonathan Hillman to PSGD

Paul Huggins to PSGD

Michael Dean to PJGD

In the Royal Arch to following Companions receive first appointments:

Jonathan Hillman – PAGSoj

John Billett – PGStB

David Gosney – PGStB

John Power – PGStB

Colin Hollingsworth – PAGDC

Paul Lane – PAGDC

William Scott – PAGDC

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

Brethren – the fact that you are here with us this evening at Brunel University confirms that it has not escaped your notice that our excellent venue at what used to be the British Airways Concorde Club is no longer available for our use.

You will also be aware that it is not available for the Annual Meeting of our Provincial Grand Chapter which will now be held at Great Queen Street on the 21st June.

I very much look forward to investing those Companions who are to receive appointments and promotions in Provincial Grand Chapter and I would ask those Companions to please stand so that we may all take this opportunity to congratulate you.

Companions – I am very aware that some of you may consider a trip to Great Queen Street to be a little inconvenient, but I would ask you please – please – do come along to support the Royal Arch Province, and particularly those Companions in your Chapter who are to be honoured.

I would love you to make it one of my white square days.

You do not need me to remind you, Brethren, that 2017 marks the Tercentenary of Grand Lodge and you will all be aware of the various events and celebrations which are being organised by Grand Lodge, by the Province of Middlesex – and by the Province of Middlesex in conjunction with the Provinces of Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire and Oxfordshire.

You will understand that I cannot – this evening – play the role of your events co-ordinator because there is just not the time available for me to do that – but I do urge you to look at the Provincial web-site to see what's going on, and please support these events as much as you can.

I would however mention to you, the following:

The Masters Ride to Brighton on the 24th June

The Fine Dining Gala Dinner on the 21st July followed by the Party in the Park – both at the Royal Masonic School for Girls on the 22nd July.

The Tercentenary Service of Thanksgiving on Sunday 5th November at Guildford Cathedral

- and much, much more.

Please get involved – please support – please enjoy.

I had a late request from the Middlesex Masonic Sports Association to point out to you that they now have a walking football section. If you are interested, then that will enable you to play on level terms with Chelsea or Arsenal.

Personally, I will wait for the MMSA to introduce a Subbuteo section which is more my line of fitness.

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 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 three years – even on those occasions when I may appear to be stuck on a black square – 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. David Wareham who will be stepping down in May after serving the Province for the past 5 years as an Assistant Provincial Grand Master.

As well as his work as an APGM David served for many years as a Deputy Grand Director of Ceremonies – and has also worked tirelessly as Chairman of the Provincial Communications Committee.

I will, of course, be more expansive in my thanks to David in May but I am sure that you will all wish to take this opportunity to join with me on this occasion to show our appreciation for everything he has done for our Province over many years.

I also have to tell you that in May I will be losing our Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies – Nigel Codron – and, again I will express my thanks more formally in May.

Nigel, as you know, is solely responsible for keeping me on the straight and narrow – a task which I know is not always easy, but which he has managed wonderfully well.

Brethren, it gives me great pleasure to announce that the Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master has been pleased to appoint W. Bro. Nigel Codron as an Assistant Provincial Grand Master and – if he behaves himself and accepts finally that I'm in charge – 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 Nigel on his appointment.

Brethren – I am equally delighted to announce that the Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master has be pleased to appoint W. Bro. Jim Mitchell as Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies and I look forward to investing Jim, also, in May.

Jim was my Director of Ceremonies when I was an Assistant Provincial Grand Master – and I taught him everything he knows. Fortunately others subsequently put him right and I know that you will all agree that he will be a terrific Provincial GDC.

I am sure Brethren that you will all wish to join with me in congratulating Jim on his appointment.

Brethren and Companions – Excellent Companion Alan Peters is standing down as an Assistant to the Provincial Grand Principals in the Royal Arch after 4 years of invaluable service to the Province and, again, I will say more about Alan at the Royal Arch meeting in June. I am sure however that you will all wish to join with me in thanking Alan for everything he has done for the Royal Arch Province.

I am pleased to announce that I will be appointing Excellent Companion Andrew Elliott as an Assistant to the Provincial Grand Principals in June, and I thank him for kindly agreeing to take on that task. I am sure you will all wish to join with me in congratulating Andrew on his appointment.

Brethren – I am very conscious that I have detained you for a long time this evening – I thank you for your very kind attention – and I will now call on Simon to introduce the next speaker this evening.