

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Provincial Grand Lodge

Thursday 1st June 2023 at 1400 hrs

There were 300 Brethren present at the Meeting with numerous apologies from Provinces and Essex Provincial Members. Names have been recorded for all those in attendance, along with those who gave apologies.

Provincial Grand Lodge commenced at 1400 hrs by receiving the various processions of distinguished guests and brethren.

The Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master called upon the Provincial Director of Ceremonies to conduct the 50 year representative brethren into Provincial Grand Lodge. W. Bro. Clive Dunnico and W. Bro. Kenneth Headworth were duly escorted into the meeting and seated in their respective places.

Provincial Grand Lodge was then opened in due form.

The Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master then introduced the Grandfather of the Lodge, W. Bro. Dickie Caldwell and explained that W. Bro. Dickie had just celebrated his 100th birthday. After much acclaim from the members, The Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master presented an engraved crystal goblet to W. Bro. Caldwell and the brethren sang a hearty “Happy Birthday” to him.

The Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master then welcomed all those attending from other Provinces, as well as his personal guests.

The Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master was informed by the Provincial Deputy Grand Secretary that The Minutes of the previous Annual Meeting, held on Wednesday 1st June 2022, had been circulated to all members and also published on the Provincial website. The minutes were put to the Brethren for adoption.

This was Proposed by W. Bro. Gordon Maclean and Seconded by W. Bro. Robin Morley and confirmed by the Brethren.

The Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master called for the Memory of the Brethren of the Province who have Passed to Grand Lodge Above in the past year to be Honoured. The list of departed Brethren was read by the Deputy Provincial Grand Master, W. Bro. John Finlay. The Provincial Grand Chaplain W. Bro. Roger Smith said the prayer on behalf of the Province.

The Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master called for Letters & Communications to be read and was informed by the Provincial Deputy Grand Secretary that a number of letters and communications of Apologies have been received from Brethren and Distinguished Guests, all of whom send their best wishes to you and all the Brethren for a happy and enjoyable Meeting.

The Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master called for the Roll of Mark and RAM Lodges to be read and was informed by the Provincial Deputy Grand Secretary that, to the best of his knowledge and belief, all Essex lodges are represented here today.

The Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master called for the Report of the Committee of General Purposes to be presented and was informed by the Provincial Deputy Grand Secretary that the Report had been circulated to all members and published on the Provincial website.

The Report was proposed for acceptance by W. Bro. Terry Nixon and seconded by W. Bro. Barry Shepherd and duly adopted.

The Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master called for the Provincial Grand Treasurer to present the Provincial Accounts. The Provincial Grand Treasurer informed the Provincial Grand Master that the Accounts had been circulated to the members and published on the Provincial website and he has nothing to add.

Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master asked for the Auditors to comment, W. Bro. Rob Sandy commented that he, along with his fellow Auditor, had examined the Books and other Records of the Province and found them satisfactory and has the pleasure in Proposing their acceptance. W. Bro. Vincent Bull, in the unavoidable absence of the Second Auditor, seconded the proposal. The Accounts were then approved and adopted.

Election of four Members of the Provincial Committee of General Purposes. The following having been nominated W. Bro. A. Hurrell, W. Bro. R. Kaye, W. Bro. P.A. Maloney and W. Bro. G. Newman. Also as Royal Arch Representative, Bro. J. Gilliland. There being no other nominations the Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master declared them elected.

Election of two Provincial Auditors. There being only two nominations received that of W. Bro. R.M. Sandy and W. Bro. D.A.J. Wilson. There being no other nominations the Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master declared them elected.

Election of six Trustees of the Essex Mark Benevolent Fund. The following having been nominated R.W. Bro. T.D. Sheern, W. Bro. J. Finlay, W. Bro. P.A. Maloney, W. Bro. R. Kaye, W. Bro. C.R. Snell and W. Bro. R. Sandy. There being no other nominations the Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master declared them elected.

Election of the Provincial Grand Treasurer. There being only one nomination received that of W. Bro. C.R. Snell. There being no other nominations the Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master declared him elected.

The Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master called on the Provincial Grand Almoner to submit his report. W. Bro. Roy Kaye said his report having been circulated to all members and also published on the Provincial website he had nothing further to add.

The Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master called for the Provincial Grand Charity Steward to submit his report. W. Bro. Peter Maloney said his report having been circulated to all members and also published on the Provincial website he had nothing further to add.

The Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master proceeded to appoint and invest the Provincial Grand Officers and those Brethren receiving Past Ranks and Promotions, as per the list in the Booklet.

Provincial Grand Lodge Officers were saluted.

The Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master addressed the Brethren.

“Brethren, I start by thanking all of you for attending today, it is so pleasing to see you and to welcome you to our new venue; I do hope you approve. Just think, you are walking in the footsteps of Royalty and past Kings and Queens.

Let me once again congratulate all those being invested today; please take pride in your new rank or office and continue to support both your Lodges and our Province.

I should also like to congratulate those Essex brethren receiving a first appointment or promotion to Grand Rank.

They are:-

Dan Heath Re-appointment Deputy Grand Secretary
Dereck Mersh Re-appointment Assistant Grand Inspector of Works
Paul Busby Grand Tyler

First Appointment

Gordon Maclean Past Assistant Grand Director of Ceremonies
Phil Hind Past Assistant Grand Sword Bearer
Laurie Kavanagh Past Grand Standard Bearer
Brian Dack Assistant Grand Inner Guard
Clive Snell Grand Steward

Promotions

John Finlay Past Grand Senior Deacon
Pete Maloney Past Grand Senior Deacon
Peter Steele Past Grand Junior Deacon

Let's give those invested today and those receiving their Grand Rank a round of applause.

I thank the active officers of this past year for their wonderful support to me and the Lodges we have visited. It has been a lot of fun and I hope you enjoyed your active role and will look back on it with pride.

To the new active officers I look forward to your company on my visits this year. I know you will enjoy them and make new friends and colleagues.

Brethren, once again I have the pleasure to introduce to you all our very newest members, both were Advanced only a few days ago and are with us today. Brother Lee Rush of the Ilford St. Mary Lodge, and Brother Peter Scopes of Wayfarers Lodge. On behalf of us all. I welcome you to the Mark Degree and this the Province of Essex in particular, you are very welcome, and we all hope you have a long and happy association with us. The Provincial Deputy Grand Secretary will give you some drinks vouchers after the meeting to enjoy a drink on us.

Brethren I am aware that V.W. Bro. Ray Clare is timing me and so I need to move swiftly on to charity! I thank those of you who have purchased our 2030 Festival Jewel, please make sure you wear it as often as possible as an encouragement to others. Those who haven't purchased one yet there is plenty of time to do so and can be done through the Provincial Website.

I also thank those of you who have organised and attended the numerous fund raising events held over the past year and hope you will continue to give the same support leading up to our 2030 Festival.

Remember, Brethren, it's your generosity that helps others less fortunate than ourselves, so please keep an eye on our dedicated 2030 website for details of all our events, this website can be found via the link on the home page of the Provincial one. If you want to know more about where your donation go please visit the video library on our website for a full review of this past years recipients, I can assure you it will make you very proud.

I can also inform you that although the final figure is not in yet, my wing walk on behalf of the 2030 Festival looks to be raising around £15,000 so a really big "thank you" for your support. I hope you enjoy watching the video made from the day which again can be found on the website.

Also thank you to Paul Thurgood and Richard Goodwin for making the day such a successful event and thank you to those who took the time to come and support me on the day and took the many photos and videos which are be available on the website and lastly to W. Bro Phil Hind for the magnificent video he has made of the event. A day I shall never forget.

If any of you have any other fund raising ideas please speak to Richard about them and let's make sure our 2030 MBF Festival is a real success.

Brethren, our web shop continues to go from strength to strength and this year has raised over £5,000 from sales via this online facility, most of that directly to our welfare account for distribution to worthy causes. So, thank you to the members of the media team for the time you give to maintaining, contributing and selling on the site.

Changing the subject to recruitment, the Province has now held three Awareness Events this year covering different areas of our Province with one more to be held on the 4th October at Orsett. The three held so far have resulted in over 20 new candidates per event, which is a wonderful achievement and I give all those involved a sincere "thank you!". These events really do work so please support them, they really do provide an opportunity for new candidates to your Lodges.

Our overall membership has once again seen an increase and of last week stands at 1,400 in the Mark and 1,000 in the Royal Ark Mariner. This is a growth of nearly 5%, this increase returns us to our membership numbers of 2008 which is a magnificent achievement, not only "post covid", but also against the national picture of numbers of Freemasons reducing as a whole, so let's continue to spread the word and continue to grow.

Last year, brethren, we introduced the "competition" to author and produce a "Provincial Keystone Lecture", which was won by R.W. Bro. Brian Vickers entitled "The history and development of the Mark Degree", and is still available for use in Lodges. This year the winning entry is entitled "The Mysterious Porphyry Stone" and was written by W. Bro, Ray Mckerron Let me remind you brethren this lecture is available for use in your Lodges and, if invited, can be presented by W. Bro Ray himself.

I should like to thank the Secretarial and Ceremonial teams and all the other helpers, car park attendants etc. for their hard work to ensure today was a success, thank you guys wherever you are.

Also to all the Right Worshipful Brethren, Heads of other Orders and the other guests for their support today.

Brethren, when I took office I stated I wanted to give others the opportunity to experience high office and thus, over the past years, have made changes at Deputy P.G.M., A.P.G.M., Prov. Secretary and Prov. G.D.C. as well as others.

The statement I made must of course apply to me as well. Brethren after holding an active office for the past 15 years in this wonderful Province, it is time for me to also retire and for someone with more energy, new ideas and commitment to take over.

It is therefore my intention to inform the Grand Secretary of my decision and to stand down before next year's annual meeting.

This will ensure that you have one of the rulers of our Order at our next meeting and to coincide and help celebrate our 125th anniversary.

Brethren, I can honestly say I have been so very lucky to have spent 15 years in active office and the past 8 years as your Provincial Grand Master.

Looking back over those years I think we can all be proud of what we have achieved together and I do thank you all so much for your support, friendship, kindness and hospitality, it has been a great honour and one I shall always cherish.

I have been lucky enough to have made many friends, not only around the Province, but also around the Country and abroad; to have worked with so many wonderful and committed members of our Province - too many to list by name - but I really do thank you all from the bottom of my heart.

I am not aware of who will be succeeding me but you can be assured as soon as he and I know you will be informed.

Whoever it may be I am confident you will give him the same support offered to me in ensuring our Mark and R.A.M. Province remains healthy and continues to grow.

Brethren, I truly thank you for listening. Let's now enjoy the rest of the day!"

A collection was taken for the Essex Mark Benevolent Fund.

The Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master asked if there was anything to bring before Provincial Grand Lodge, the Provincial Deputy Grand Secretary confirmed there was nothing to add.

Provincial Grand Lodge was closed in antient and solemn form.