



The Provincial Grand Master's Address to Provincial Grand Lodge



It is my great pleasure to stand before you today and address this distinguished gathering of Mark Master Masons. I extend a warm welcome to all our honoured guests and visitors. I thank you all for the hospitality extended to our Executive when visiting your Provinces and I hope that you will enjoy your time with us. It is my sincere hope Brethren that you will all enjoy the meeting and the after proceedings.

Brethren, as we reflect on the past year and look forward to the future, I want to begin by expressing my deepest thanks and appreciation to each of you. Your dedication, commitment, and enthusiasm ensure that our Province continues to thrive. From our Lodge meetings to our charitable endeavours, it is your collective effort that strengthens our Order.

One of our key focuses remains retention, ensuring that our members continue to find joy, fulfilment, and purpose within our fraternity. Freemasonry is a lifelong journey, and it is crucial that we support each other in maintaining engagement and enthusiasm. A strong, active membership

forms the foundation of our Province, and by fostering meaningful experiences, we will continue to grow together.

Equally important is recruitment. As we move forward, let us actively encourage like-minded brethren to join us in this wonderful Order. By sharing our passion for the Mark Degree and demonstrating its unique benefits, we will inspire others to take this rewarding step in their Masonic journey.

Brethren I'm sure you all remember the PGM challenge to the newly installed WM (with the help of his lodge members) to find a candidate for his year in office. With that in mind I must give a mention to W.Bro. Stuart Hogarth of Percy Lodge No 114 who is halfway through his 2nd consecutive year in the hot seat, after which he will have advanced 17 new members (*they held extra meetings and did double advancements*) - so congratulations Stuart and your team.

Many Lodges have also done well, albeit some have had their difficulties. To those that might need help and assistance please do not hesitate to liaise with your VO so that together we can try to find a solution.

At the heart of all we do is brotherly love and caring. The Mark Degree teaches us to look after one another, both within and beyond our Lodges. Whether through charity, friendship, or simply a kind word, our strength as a Province lies in the support we offer each other. Let us continue to uphold these values, ensuring that no brother ever feels alone or forgotten.

Looking ahead, we have an exciting year before us, filled with opportunities to celebrate our fraternity, welcome new members, and strengthen our bonds. I encourage you all to take part in the events, meetings, and initiatives planned, as they will enrich your Masonic experience and deepen our shared camaraderie.

Our Surrey Mark Charity Golf day is at Chobham Golf Club on the 2nd of June. It's the taking part that matters brethren, not the winning.....so I'm led to believe (just remind the bandits of that!),

We will be reponing one of our warrants to form an Almoners Lodge. The take up for this new Lodge has been very successful so, please come along to this meeting scheduled for July the 17th.



Today I am pleased to announce the launch of the “Surrey Keystone Club” for those below the rank of Provincial Officer. This is to cultivate friendships, support growth, increase knowledge and, most of all, have fun! All Mark Masons who are not Provincial Officers and all future newly Advanced Brethren will automatically become members.

There are no costs, except the cost of attending events and there is no application form to complete. The Provincial Grand Secretary will contact the Committee to update them with the newly Advanced Brethren’s details and will assist in maintaining the membership database. You will be contacted in the near future, and I would ask that those eligible to engage with the club and, if possible, volunteer to be on the Committee to help make this a success.



The special bond of Mark Master Masons is something truly unique. We are united by our principles, strengthened by our ritual, and inspired by our fellowship. It is this bond that makes our Order so rewarding and sets us apart as a truly special Masonic experience.

To the active Provincial Officers who are standing down from office, I hope that you have enjoyed your time in Office, and I thank you for your support personally and for the Province, which is very much appreciated.

I would like to thank V.W.Bro. Chris Eley for his sterling work in producing the Surrey Keystone (including today’s edition “looking back over the last year”) which has been so well read, received,

and appreciated by us all.

A huge thank you to my past and present VO’s who visit Lodges throughout the Province to support your Lodges in whatever way is needed and whose work is essential to the well running of the Province.



To the Provincial Officers that I have appointed and promoted today I offer you all my sincere congratulations. To those who have received active Office it is my hope that you will make good use of your year in office and see it as an opportunity.

You have been invited to accompany me and the other members of the Provincial Executive on visits to Lodges in the Province - there is no compulsion or



requirement to do so, albeit it is an opportunity to visit other Lodges, to provide support to them and increase the enjoyment for us all. Most importantly I hope that that you will enjoy the year ahead. I ask that each of you consider it part of your responsibility to promote our Order and, in particular to encourage the younger Brethren.

Events such as an Annual Meeting don’t just happen. To the Provincial Grand Secretary and his team, I thank you for all the hard work you have put in throughout the year and to the preparations for today’s meeting; and likewise to the Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies and his team.

I also thank the members of the Provincial Grand Stewards Lodge for their tremendous support in the build up to today’s meeting and throughout the year. I am most grateful to you all.

Last and by no means least I am indebted to my Executive and every member of the Executive Committee who continue to give outstanding service to the Province and support to me personally. I must also thank our Past Provincial Grand Master, Right Worshipful Brother Ian Clark, for his support during this year – Thank you Ian.

Finally, brethren, let us never forget the importance of enjoyment in Masonry. While our principles are serious and our work meaningful, we should always take joy in our meetings, our friendships, and our shared purpose. A thriving, happy Lodge is a

successful Lodge, and I encourage each of you to embrace and promote the spirit of enjoyment in all you do.

Brethren, it is a great honour and privilege to continue to serve the Province. I thank you all for the kind attention that you have given to my address and may the Great Overseer of the Universe bless and keep you well.

John V C French
Provincial Grand Master
15th March 2025



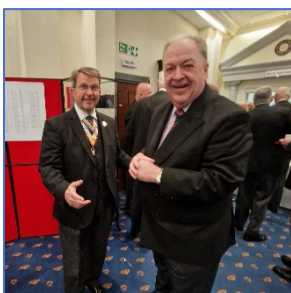


The 2025 Annual Meeting of Provincial Grand Lodge



The Annual Meeting of the Provincial Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons of Surrey took place on Saturday the 15th of March at the Croydon and District Masonic Hall, Croydon. Once again, our Provincial Grand Stewards did a splendid job of ensuring everyone was able to park in the Stanton Road car park.

From 9.30 am the Brethren of the Province and their guests started arriving for coffee and bacon butties while the Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies and his team were busy rehearsing.

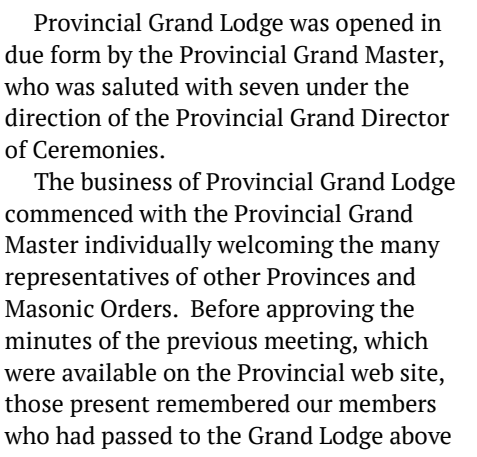


It was good to catch up with old friends from the Province of Surrey and the other Provinces.



By 10.35 am everyone was seated in the Temple. Just after 10.45 pm the Brethren were called to order to receive the distinguished guests, including Right Worshipful Brethren and past members of the Provincial Executive.

The meeting was called to order by W.Bro. Les Smith, **P.G.Stwd.**, the Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies, to receive the Provincial Officers of the year accompanying the Assistant Provincial Grand Masters, the Deputy Provincial Grand Master and the R.W. Provincial Grand Master, led by the Provincial Grand Sword Bearer and followed by the Provincial Grand Standard Bearer.



Provincial Grand Lodge was opened in due form by the Provincial Grand Master, who was saluted with seven under the direction of the Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies.

The business of Provincial Grand Lodge commenced with the Provincial Grand Master individually welcoming the many representatives of other Provinces and Masonic Orders. Before approving the minutes of the previous meeting, which were available on the Provincial web site, those present remembered our members who had passed to the Grand Lodge above since the last annual meeting. The

Provincial Grand Chaplain, W. Bro. Les Grout, read the names and then offered a prayer. The Brethren then sang the hymn "The Day Thou Gavest Lord is Ended"

The Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master welcomed 14 newly Advanced brethren who were presented with a special pin badge and a beer voucher.



The Travelling Keystone was brought into Provincial Grand Lodge and was presented to the Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master by W.Bro. Michael Prentice. The Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master commented that the Travelling Keystone had been prepared as an initiative to encourage visiting and promote the exchange of goodwill and fellowship between Lodges in the Province.



The Provincial Grand Master confirmed the re-appointment of W.Bro. William R Barr, **P.G.J.D.**, as Deputy Provincial Grand Master. V.W.Bro. William A Caughie, **P.G.J.O.**, and W.Bro. John Massey, **P.G.J.D.**, were re-appointed as Assistant Provincial Grand Masters.

A total of 62 appointments and promotions in Provincial Grand Rank were announced: as well as 9 Brethren receiving Provincial Royal Ark Mariner Grand Rank. The Brethren of the Province of Surrey below the rank of Provincial Grand Officer were called to order to salute the newly appointed and invested Provincial Grand Officers with three.

The Provincial Grand Master addressed Provincial Grand Lodge. A copy of his

Address is on the front page. The Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master called upon the Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies to present the Provincial Grand Charity Steward, W. Bro. Alan Brockwell to him. W. Bro. Alan presented a cheque for £3,050 to the Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master which was the proceeds from the Used Regalia sales.



The Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master called upon the Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies to present W.Bros. Jack Love, Graham Walder, Stephen Dingvean, John Woodville, Des Franklin, and Bro Peter Skoglund to him. The Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master presented them with MBF Collarettes in recognition of their support to the Mark Benevolent Fund.

The meeting was then called to order and closed in due form. The Provincial Grand Master, the Deputy Provincial Grand Master, and the Assistant Provincial Grand Masters, together with members of the Past Executive, honoured guests and Provincial Officers then left the Temple in procession to the echoing strains of Land of Hope and Glory.



The members of the Provincial Executive greeted all our Honoured Guests as they retired from Provincial Grand Lodge. The Brethren of the Mark Province of Surrey and their guests then retired to the bar.



After refreshments the Brethren of the Province of Surrey and their guests dined together in peace and harmony.





After the meal the Provincial Grand Master presented the Travelling Keystone to Weyside Mark Lodge No 442 as the Lodge with the highest percentage of members at the festive board.



The Deputy Provincial Grand Master, W.Bro. Bill Barr, proposed the Toast to the Provincial Grand Master who thanked W.Bro. Bill and all the Brethren present and then proposed the Toast to the Visitors. The Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master, the Deputy Provincial Grand Master, the Assistant Provincial Grand Masters, and other distinguished Brethren then retired from the Festive Board



Photos by Michael Fenech and Andrew Banks

A Member's View

What a superb day/weekend! The four of us, from St. Andrew's Lodge No 806, set off at about 8.00 am on a beautifully crisp Saturday for Croydon. We were off to the Mark Annual Provincial Lodge meeting. Quite exciting really and I had a few jobs to do! We arrived in good time, and it was immediately noticeable that there were going to be quite a few Surrey Mark men and others as well. There was such a large queue for the bacon sandwiches, sausages and good tea.

Upstairs, our DC, W.Bro. Les Smith, was in full control, comme d'habitude, and new guys were learning the ropes for the opening ceremony due in about an hour or so. There is a certain pride in all participating men, and we wanted the opening to go well. Downstairs the place was packed with much good humour, shaking of hands and, of course, buttie eating. The number of people gathered was quite surprising and filled all robing areas.



The meeting began, the seats were filled, and the arrival of the Right Worshipful Grand Master was announced by the DC. We paraded in and turned to welcome our Provincial Grand Master, R.W.Bro. J.V.C French. Then came his welcome to our guests who came from all over the South of England, from Wales to Worcestershire and from Middlesex to Lincolnshire

and Provinces in between. A terrific get together of Mark men in the South of England! The sound could have been a little more up-volumed but his welcome to these Mark men was very obvious as they stood up and reciprocated the greeting in true Mark fashion.

Minutes were presented and a large number of Newly Advanced Brethren were individually presented to the Provincial Grand Master who immediately put them at their ease with his easy going, yet impressive, congratulations to each and every one of them.

The Travelling Keystone was returned to Province by W.Bro. Michael Prentice of St Andrew's Lodge No. 806, and the annual reports were presented to members, Audit Committee members were elected and the executive team of W.Bro. Bill Barr, D.P.G.M, and V.W.Bro. Bill Caughie with W.Bro John Massey Assistant Provincial Grand Masters, were re-appointed. Provincial Grand Officers, and those receiving Promotion and Past Ranks were all invested in a well-meaning manner. The Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master delivered his emphatic and encouraging address to all gathered, the charity collection was taken before the parading out of all involved. This was such an impressive meeting, and I look forward to next year as we continue to grow in numbers.



Our small group of five St Andrew's men met in the bar and exchanged views on a very successful meeting before entering the well-appointed dining room for our customary Festive Board. No naughty boys room for us as we took our places at table number ten! A good meal followed of succulent lamb with all the trimmings, followed by a very acceptable dessert. I even had the opportunity to serve wine to all tables and met some good men from other Provinces. No raffle. No long speeches. Just a pleasant end to a superb visit to Croydon.

The event was topped by some good results at the rugby, a great F1 outcome and as for the tennis...Well!

What a superb day. Thank you, Provincial Secretary and team. Thank you to the Provincial Executive and our Provincial Grand Master. Am looking forward to next year.

Thanks to Michael Fenech for the photos and his report