

ADDRESS TO CRAFT (INSTALLATION)

Most Worshipful Pro Grand Master, Right Worshipful Brethren, Distinguished Guests, Brethren all.

May I first, for myself and for the Province of Sussex, thank the Most Worshipful Pro Grand Master for being with us today and particularly for so ably installing me as the Provincial Grand Master for Sussex. As I mentioned this morning, it is a great honour for this Province to have the Pro Grand Master with us and we are grateful to him for having given of his valuable time to do so. We are fast approaching the Tercentenary Year of our organisation when his commitments will be even more extensive than usual and this has had a knock back effect of making 2016 a more than usually busy year for Grand Lodge and for him in particular.

The Installation Ceremony this afternoon has also involved a team of Officers from Grand Lodge and I therefore thank them for having assisted the Pro Grand Master today. I find it personally inspiring to see the manner in which they perform their duties in what appears to be effortless ease – but it is that ease which comes from much practice and attention to detail beforehand. We have the new Grand Secretary with us today, and we particularly congratulate him on his appointment especially because he is now also a Sussex Mason, but I would have felt slightly short changed if my patents had been read other than in the mellifluous tones of the Deputy Grand Secretary, Very Worshipful Brother Graham Redman who has, to most of us mere mortals, become something of a Masonic legend in his own lifetime.

And I would be grateful, Sir, if you will take back our thanks to all those at Freemasons Hall who have so readily and comprehensively assisted us, and particularly our Provincial Grand Secretary and Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies, from behind the scenes in the organisation of what I hope has been the success of today

We have a large number of distinguished guests from other Provinces and Orders. Should they stay for our Annual Meeting I will be pleased to welcome them individually. If they are not able to do so I take this opportunity of thanking them for coming and, by their presence, enhancing our proceedings.

My thanks must also be made internally. The Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies has been presented with an unfamiliar venue which differs in not insignificant detail from where we would normally have met. He has, in Round Table parlance, had to adopt, adapt and improve. He and his Deputies and their team have done so admirably and I thank them for all their hard work in the successful undertaking of the Provincial side of the ceremonial and general organisation for and of today.

Every year the Provincial Grand Secretary has an Annual Meeting to organise. Every eight to ten years he has two Installations to organise – those of the Grand Superintendent and Provincial Grand Master. The Annual Meeting and the Installation Meetings are on different dates - except on this occasion. The Provincial Grand Secretary has therefore had to undertake the organisation and co-ordination of what are normally one totally separate and two semi-separate events all taking place on the same day. Add to that a different venue to that in which we would normally meet and that the arrangements for the Installations were at relatively short notice and you may begin to understand the magnitude of his task. I appreciate he has a team to assist him but much of the work has been on his shoulders as, in

the final event, is the responsibility. In the meantime the normal business of the Province has to go on notwithstanding the arrangements for today. The task is an onerous one which our Provincial Grand Secretary has discharged with great ability. If today is a success, and I hope that it is, much of the credit should go to him and he deserves the gratitude of his Province.

But his success is only possible with a team ably to support him. They have dealt with the moving of the furnishings of a Lodge and Chapter room from Worthing to this hotel, communications with other Provinces and Orders, layout of the rooms, seating allocation, signage, the luncheon layout and name cards – I will not go on as you will understand my drift. All who have assisted to make today such a great success also have my and the Provinces grateful thanks

There is one Brother whom I should thank but who is not here today. Right Worshipful Brother Ken Thomas has served this Province for four years as an Assistant Provincial Grand Master, six years as Deputy Provincial Grand Master and nine years as Provincial Grand Master. If we add the year he was a Provincial Warden that makes a round total of twenty years. Our Past Provincial Grand Master has therefore been in high office in this Province for over one third of his adult life. Although Sir Leonard Barford was Provincial Grand Master for slightly longer in the 1970s and 1980s, his total years as an Assistant and Provincial Grand Master are less than Brother Ken's and you have to go back to the years of Arthur Jolly in the 1950s to 1970s to find someone who has served this Province in such high offices for longer. Brethren, our thanks are due to Brother Ken for his unstinting and exemplary leadership of this Province for so many years and I am sure you will all join with me in wishing him and Maureen well in his, perhaps I should say their, Masonic retirement.

There are matters to be attended to in this Province and there are moves afoot to do so – of which you will hear more in due course. This is not the occasion to expand upon them and I will content myself by saying that there will be two main areas on which I wish my administration to focus – that of membership and premises. Both of these, along with other pointers, feature in the recently published Grand Lodge Strategy but I think it instructive that the Right Worshipful Deputy Grand Master particularly mentioned these two very aspects as being of particular importance in the course of his Address at Quarterly Communications on 9th March last. It is comforting to know that the concerns of the Province of Sussex mirror those of United Grand Lodge even if they differ in scale.

Brethren, I do have another bite at the cherry of addressing you at the end of our Annual Meeting but I hope that, unusually for me, it will be kept relatively short – but never trust a lawyer!