

Right Worshipful Deputy Grand Master, Right Worshipful Brethren and Brethren all, I am so pleased to welcome you all to the Franklin Rooms, Gillingham in Kent and, in particular, I welcome our Right Worshipful Deputy Grand Master, Clive Robert Manuel. It is a real privilege for me to address you all once again and I thoroughly appreciate the fact that you have all taken valuable time out of your busy lives to be here today. I wish to thank all the District Grand Prefects for extending to me and my colleagues their friendship and hospitality when visiting their Districts in the various parts of England and Wales. Similarly, I thank Heads of other Orders within Kent for their kind invitations to join them at Annual Meetings.

For me, one of the benefits of being District Grand Prefect, is to recognise and to acknowledge those deserving Brethren with District Grand appointments. It goes without saying that each District appointment is well earned and I trust that the Brethren, whom I have appointed today, will be able to enjoy the dignity of the rank and enjoy undertaking the duties. I thank the outgoing District team for its support throughout the past year and now it is a pleasure for me to congratulate the incoming District team. During the course of the year ahead, I will be making two special visits to Councils and I wish for as many of the District team as possible to join me on the dates, which have been notified already to the Council Secretaries.

I must thank the District Secretarial team and the Director of Ceremony's team for their dedication and help in making things run smoothly for me throughout the year and for making this Annual District meeting a success.

Brethren, we have a goodly number of Kent Brethren, who were honoured at the last Grand Council meeting.

They are:

1. R.W.Bro. Clive Robert Manuel re-appointed as Deputy Grand Master;
2. R.W.Bro. Kessick John Jones appointed as President of the Executive Committee, who is currently on masonic duty in Spain;
3. W.Bro. David Jordan promoted to Deputy Grand Director of Ceremonies;
4. W.Bro. Derek Roy Wilkins appointed to Past Grand Standard Bearer;
5. W.Bro. Peter Basil Torres appointed to Past Grand Standard Bearer;
6. W.Bro. Peter Abbott, who is recovering after a serious heart attack, appointed to Past Grand Inner Guard;
7. W.Bro. Roy Albert Pike posthumously appointed to Past Grand Inner Guard – I am indebted to Grand Council for perpetuating the name of our well known Brother; and
8. W.Bro. Trevor John Harrison promoted to Past Grand Junior Deacon.

Please, let us acknowledge the appointments with a round of applause.

Brethren, when I have visited Councils within the District of Kent, I have always been very pleased to see that they continue to be in good heart. I am proud to witness the tireless effort of the Brethren to improve their standard of ritual for the benefit of the candidates. When appropriate, I am not averse to putting candidates at ease with a little

light humour. At the end of the day, the presentation of each degree should provide an enjoyable experience for the candidates as well as fulfilling reasonable masonic expectations. Now, I have noticed in my travels that some Councils in Kent tend to struggle with meeting the number of participants required for working a degree as well as dealing with the complexity of certain rituals - I specifically refer to the degrees of The Holy Order of Grand High Priest and The Red Cross of Babylon. With this in mind, it is my wish to form a Past Masters' Council with the sole aim of undertaking one or other of these two degrees. For instance, if it was decided to undertake The Red Cross of Babylon degree, I envisage that it would include the banquet as described in the ritual book. Of course, this Past Masters' Council should not usurp the right of any Council within the District to undertake this work if it so desires. The proposed Council will be named the "Roy Albert John Williams Past Masters Council" after our very first District Grand Prefect and, I am very pleased to say, our Deputy Grand Master has tentatively agreed to be the Primus Master. It is my intention to call a Founders' meeting, sometime in March this year, at which the dates, location and the number of meetings will be discussed and agreed. I wish to thank my Executive Committee for their assistance in this matter and for W.Bro. Jason Cameron-Potter taking on the role of Founding Secretary.

Further, as a result of the Committee's work in relation to recruitment, I can announce that W.Bro. Phil Clare has volunteered to be the District's Communications guru. He, in turn, has arranged for a site on Facebook to be dedicated to members of the Allied Masonic Degrees and beyond – it has already attracted over two hundred hits and it very much compliments the District's website. Then, following on from templates produced by W.Bro. Ralph Apperley, Bro. Scott Dunn has published an excellent pocket-sized District Calendar and a Flyer incorporating a membership application form - both of these publications are available at the reception desk with a pen. There will be no prizes for guessing, which District first adopted one or other of these publications but what I can say is that all Districts are in the same boat when discussing the recruitment of new members. In a world that has a new openness and has so many competing interests, it requires us all to employ different platforms of communication in order to engage with our younger Brethren, who are well versed in computer technology and social media. This District is not alone in seeking the latest aids and tools to help in the quest to attract a new generation of members whilst never losing sight of the need to help the Mark, Royal Arch and the Craft.

Last year, I did touch on the subject of recruitment by calling upon each of you to act as a recruiting sergeant. The District Grand Secretary mentioned in his report that our total membership for Kent has slightly slipped for the first time, I believe, and so it is now imperative that we try to address this matter in a timely fashion.

Brethren, I must say that I am in awe with the generosity displayed by the members of this District – you have already donated monies for good causes in other areas of Freemasonry and yet you make it possible for this District to play its part in contributing to the Charities. It is, therefore, my wish that, this year, the District of

Kent makes a further donation to the 2020 Mark Festival and I will, in due course, present a cheque to our most recent member, Bro. Archie Torrance.

In conclusion, Brethren, I wish to thank all those members of this District of Kent for their continued kindness, support and enthusiasm for the Order. I certainly look forward to meeting each and everyone of you in your own Councils during the year ahead. It now only remains for me to ask you all to continue to enjoy your Allied Masonry.

Thank you for your polite attention and God bless you all.

Peter Brockbank, DGP