



PROVINCIAL GRAND LODGE
OF HAMPSHIRE AND ISLE OF WIGHT

Toast List for Craft Lodges

(From 4th July 2018)

The **QUEEN** and the **CRAFT**

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**The Most Worshipful the Grand Master**

His Royal Highness The Duke of Kent *KG, GCMG, GCVO, ADC*

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The Most Worshipful Pro Grand Master

Peter Geoffrey Lowndes

The Right Worshipful Deputy Grand Master

Jonathan Spence

The Right Worshipful Assistant Grand Master

Sir David Hugh Wootton

and the rest of the Grand Officers Present and Past

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**The Provincial Grand Master**

R.W.Bro. Michael John Wilks

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The Deputy Provincial Grand Master

W.Bro. Jonathan Charles Whitaker PSGD

The Assistant Provincial Grand Masters

W.Bro. Roy Anthony Quin PSGD

W.Bro. David George Foot PSGD

W.Bro. Leon Michael Whitfield PSGD

W.Bro. Barrie Conrad John Hewitt PSGD

W.Bro. Peter Gordon Vosser AGSuptWks

W.Bro. Jonathan David Stainton-Ellis PAGSwdB

and the rest of the Provincial, Metropolitan and District Grand Officers Present and Past

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**The Worshipful Master**

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The Initiate

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**The Installing Master**

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Visitors

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**Officers of The Lodge**

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Tyler's Toast

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Decorations etc., following the names should not be given when the toast is actually given in all the above cases.



## **PROVINCIAL AGM 2018**

### **Provincial Grand Master's Address**

1. I start as ever by thanking you all for attending this meeting in such numbers and supporting the brethren I have been pleased to honour this afternoon. It is a very special meeting for them – an important part of their Masonic journey and I trust that it will live long in their memories.

2. I well remember my first Provincial appointment – within three years of installing my successor as Master of my mother Lodge, I was privileged to be appointed a Provincial Grand Steward, and on being invested the Provincial Grand Master said – Michael, this is not for what you have done, it is for what you are going to do.

3. Those words apply to all those brethren honoured this afternoon and I know that I, and the Province, can rely on their support going forward –brethren, you never know where you will end up!

4. May I also thank our guests from other Provinces – it is our delight and pleasure to be able to repay the hospitality which we have enjoyed at their Provincial Meetings, and I am so pleased to be able to welcome them in such numbers. And of course, the Heads of other Masonic Orders in the Province, all of whom are well represented.

5. This is the ninth Provincial Annual Meeting which I have been privileged to lead as your Provincial Grand Master and by my side throughout has been V W Brother Graham Williams whom I was pleased to appoint as my Deputy on the day of my investiture. I have already thanked Graham for his unparalleled support over the past 8 years, during the course of which the Province has changed immeasurably.

6. I cannot tell you how important it was, particularly during the early days after my appointment, to have the unwavering support of a Deputy who was a true friend. It is time for Graham to move on, as we plan for the future of the Province, but I know that he will continue to support the Province in every way possible – albeit without a chain of office.

7. Graham has been replaced by Jon Whitaker who was one of my early appointments as Assistant Provincial Grand Master and who has been with us throughout the changes, including of course the creation of the Area Structure. Likewise, Bill Withers, who stands down as APGM for the NEArea after 5 years,

in favour of his Chairman Peter Vosser. I have no doubt that Peter, and Jonathan Stainton-Ellis who replaces Jon as APGM for the SCArea, will rise to the challenges of their new roles.

8. The Area APGMs have a pivotal role to play in the Province, leading their Area Executives which have been so successful since they were established. Our growth across the Province for the current calendar year is 3.85% which contrasts with the average of all Provinces which is just under 1%.

Notwithstanding, there is still much work to be done which will be overseen by the Area teams who have been instrumental in bringing about this change in our fortunes. It is important that our Lodges and our brethren continue to respond positively to the Area teams.

9. It must be very clear to all brethren that the changes which we have made over the past 8 years are working for the benefit of the Province and our brethren. Nonetheless, there are still some brethren who oppose change regardless, apparently preferring to go down with a sinking ship rather than carry out necessary repairs. Such brethren are losing what influence they had with the vast majority of our brethren recognising that opposition to change is driven by an obsession which has no place in Freemasonry or indeed in the modern world. We are all passionate about Freemasonry – never brethren allow that passion to develop into an obsession.

10. The Masonic Pathway has been highly successful, and the role out will continue in the coming year. I thank the Membership and Mentoring teams for their involvement and for giving up their time so freely which has made such a difference to our Recruitment and Retention programme.

11. Recruitment is now a routine process in many Lodges who are working double ceremonies to cope with the influx. Our new brethren are enjoying their Freemasonry and introducing their friends in numbers. It is clear that they are enjoying their Masonic experience and want to share it with their friends. Our Focus Lodges and Learning and Development teams are providing further insight for those who want it.

12. I believe that the Masonic experience in many of our Lodges is such that men joining those Lodges now are less likely to leave than has been the case in the past. Nonetheless Resignations, which continue to decline, are still an important issue which must be addressed. Many Resignations are by brethren who have not attended Lodge for some years – and have been paying their annual subscription for no return. All Lodges should address this issue – such brethren wish to remain Freemasons and on taking their subscription we have a duty to see what we can do in return. Many will have got out of the habit of attending Lodge – and may have forgotten the processes and protocol which we all take for granted. At the very least, we should be offering to guide and mentor such brethren back into the Lodge.

13. Many Lodges are keen to press brethren to pay up – sometimes

accompanied by the threat of Exclusion. Lodges should reflect on this – brethren may have ceased attending Lodge for a whole host of very good reasons, they continue to pay their annual subscription and therefore are supportive albeit from a distance, and we have a responsibility to look after them and make every effort to Mentor them back into the Lodge. A telephone call by the Almoner to check that the brother is “alright” falls woefully short of what is required. Likewise, a telephone call from the Treasurer requiring payment of the annual subscription. Very often these brethren need a guiding hand to assist their return to their Masonic journey.

14. This process of mentoring absentees back into the fold is very rewarding, and some Lodges do it routinely. Our experience is that brethren brought back into Lodge in this way become regular attenders because they realise what they have been missing. Interestingly this is also a by-product of our 40th anniversary certificates which are usually presented to regular attenders as a recognition of their service and commitment over 40 years. But making contact with a brother who has been a member for 40 years, but no longer attends, has resulted in a number of brethren attending for the presentation of their certificate. On being welcomed back to Lodge by friends they had not seen for some time, they realise what they have been missing, and become regular attenders. An unintended consequence of our 40th anniversary initiative! And another brother removed from the Potential Resignation List!

15. During the past year we have consecrated the Samuel Cody Aviation Lodge which is the eighth Consecration in as many years. The Lodge has a supply of initiates and indeed joining members which is the story of all the special interest Lodges which we have created, two of which now appear in the List of 10 Best Lodges in the Province by Growth. I have no doubt Samuel Cody will shortly also be joining them in that list and I wish all the new Lodges well in the coming years. Next year we will be consecrating a new Lodge on the Isle of Wight - the Vectis Services Lodge for men involved in the services, both military and civilian. There is also talk of a Cyclists Lodge on the horizon although it is very early days.

16. At the other end of the spectrum I am delighted that a number of our Installed Masters Lodges have agreed to become Focus Lodges to assist the Training and Development team to deliver Masonic learning to those brethren who want to go beyond our ritual dramas. This is a valuable resource and I am grateful to the brethren and Lodges who have embraced the concept.

17. Our focus on supporting local non-Masonic Charities with presentations at Area events attended by civic dignitaries has continued throughout the year. Kay and I routinely attend these presentations and the support from civic leaders is heartening and an indication of the increased acceptance of the Craft within the community.

18. These Events always involve our Freemasonry in the Community team and I

wish to thank them for their involvement in so many activities in each of our 6 Areas. This is a heavy but very rewarding commitment for those involved and I congratulate them on their logistical expertise which has enabled them in many cases to ensure support for two or more Events on the same day.

19. At the last AGM I announced that we had reached our £50,000 target for Lifelites and its continuing involvement in Naomi House and Jacks Place just 4 months after the Appeal was launched. I tried to close the Appeal, but money continued to come in and so I had discussions with Lifelites as a result of which I am delighted to say that Lifelites have finalised an entirely new package to assist Naomi House with a Long Term Ventilation unit – and to use this project as a pilot for similar projects at other children's hospices across the country. The cost of the pilot scheme was £25,000 and I am pleased to say we have already reached that amount. It is a privilege to be able to assist these wonderful innovative charities to work together for the benefit of children and young persons with life limiting conditions right across the country. The Appeal is now closed, but I know money will continue to come in.

20. Our two Provincial Charities have continued to provide support in their new guise following re-organisation, as referred to in their Annual Reports, and I thank them for their significant contribution to charitable giving and support across the Province.

21. This year is the centenary of the end of the Great War and I am grateful to our Provincial Orator for producing a Eulogy and a Service to commemorate the anniversary. The Service of the Empty Chair will be worked in a number of our Lodges, hopefully at least one in each Masonic Centre. It is a moving service which lasts just 30 minutes and may be worked before the Lodge is opened, or when the Lodge is called off. The Service includes a 10 Minute Eulogy which will be available to all Lodges which are encouraged to give the Eulogy during their November Meetings. This of course is in addition to our support of Remembrance Day by attending civil services and Events across the Province.

22. Next year is the 150th anniversary of the amalgamation of the Province of Hampshire, founded in 1767, with the Province of Isle of Wight, founded in 1772. We will celebrate the anniversary with a number of Events details of which will be promulgated in due course.

23. I have thanked the Area teams but they, in turn, are supported by teams working across the Province – Membership, Training and Development, Mentoring, Social Media, Insight magazine, Communications, Marketing – and of course our Visiting Officers who work closely with Lodges supporting them as necessary – I thank them all for their commitment and work which is making such a difference to our Province.

24. In conclusion, I thank all those who have worked so hard to make today a success – the Provincial Grand Secretary and his team at the Provincial Office,

the Provincial GDC and his team of Deputies, and the members of the Provincial Grand Stewards Lodge who work behind the scenes and front of house and are involved in every aspect of the meeting and the after proceedings. And of course, the many brethren who volunteer to give up their time to do whatever is required to make this day a success and a credit to the Province.

25. Brethren we are a hierarchical organisation as indeed we must be –but in the modern world, this only works in a fraternal organisation if it is driven from the bottom. This is now happening in our Province. The vast majority of those brethren who have been fortunate enough to be appointed to Provincial rank and beyond in this Province recognise and understand that we are all brothers, and our newest members are entitled to the same dignity and respect as the most senior brother. I believe that this is key to our future – wherever we sit in the overall scheme of things, we must never forget where we started out on our Masonic journey. Senior brethren are available to guide and advise as necessary – with tact and diplomacy, as brothers or equals, working together in harmony. Those Lodges which are thriving have a wonderful relationship between the young and older members working together and enjoying their relationship as brothers.

26. Brethren, there is a lot more for us to do – but we now have the necessary momentum which will take us forward for the benefit of all. I do hope that you have all enjoyed the occasion and I wish you every happiness in the coming years.

4 July 2018

R W Bro Michael J Wilks  
Provincial Grand Master