

## Address to Divisional Meeting 9<sup>th</sup> December 2023

Here we are again. This is my 10<sup>th</sup> address to you at our Divisional Conclave, all of them slightly different. I hope

Before proceeding however I must thank all of the Officers of the last year for their tremendous support and to thank the new officers of this year for their enthusiasm, sometimes heavily camouflaged, on agreeing to their roles.

I must, once again, pay tribute to Ill Kt Mike Graham for his constant support in the various offices he has held and also for his advice when asked for. He has now 'retired' as Divisional Eusebius and Ill Kt John Kettlewell has succeeded him. John has spent 10 years as our Divisional Almoner and he has done an enormous amount of work behind the scenes to ensure that no one is left out and unsupported. He is an extremely hard act to follow.

As a Division we have 'lost' a further 8 members (net) over the last year but that is not the whole picture. We do seem to have left behind the Covid 'winter' and are seeing the fresh green shoots of the 'spring' with nearly all Conclaves producing candidates. Two of them have done so after a very lean period of several years! I congratulate you all but do not rest on your laurels, there is still plenty to do.

Those who are struggling a bit are organising open evenings, one happened in Scarborough on 29<sup>th</sup> November and I'm told that they have recruited a potential 4 candidates another is being planned in Hull in January. Hoveden Conclave which has recently moved to Selby has attracted a further 3 Candidates. I shall be looking on with interest and attending if requested.

I must mention again the three knights who died this year, Ill Kt Gordon Setterfield died on the date of our last Divisional meeting and was a true friend to me having helped Provincial Overseers ranks together in 1998, likewise V Ill Kt Donald Davinson was a great support and a role model to many in his time as Deputy PGM of the Craft and G Supt in the Chapter, Ill Kt John Warburton was a giant of a man and an extremely talented musician. Who can forget him playing the organ in York Minster for our 1500<sup>th</sup> anniversary service of Constantine's succession as emperor in 2006 and then playing for the Christmas harmony at Roger de Mowbray Conclave. Finally Ill Kt Keith Ainsworth a quiet man, extremely able, who may have risen high in masonry had it not been for a stroke he suffered some years ago. He died on his 79<sup>th</sup> birthday. All will be sadly missed.

In our busy lives, and it gets no less busy, time is of the essence but we still need to produce ritual that is fit for a candidate to hear, showing not only the rich ritual of the Order but the care and respect for it we all share. In recent times members progressing to the chairs have been surprised when, only a few days before the enthronement meetings, they have been presented by either Rituals 3 or 4.

These ceremonies are fairly complex to start with so an awareness of these rituals is vital. The Divisional Recorder has written to all Conclaves requesting them to purchase Rituals 3 and 4 in order to pass them on to those who need them so that all are totally *au fait* with what they need to learn.

Still on the subject of ritual, a revision of Rituals 1 and 2 is underway, removing the reference to the Battle of the Milvian Bridge and correcting some of the Latin 'mistakes and errors' contained. A simple sheet explaining the corrections is due out at any time and the new books will be available next year.

My final point is that ritual should be learnt if at all possible but if not it should at least be read and understood before it is delivered so the person reading is aware of how the sentences flow. I feel if you are unable to master the whole ritual the instruction on the grip and words etc must be learnt as trying to explain them to a candidate with a book in your hand is only worthy of a Monty Python sketch.

I must add a mention on education and specifically education on the history of the Red Cross of Constantine story. In March 2020, shortly after the world was first locked down due to the Covid-19 pandemic, R III Kt Marc Burton the then Intendant General of what is now South Africa wrote the first of a series of mini lectures to all of his members. So successful was this that eventually over 100 of these were written and distributed. He shared them which led to the creation of the 'Red Cross Herald', a newsletter coming out of Mark Masons' Hall. These have now been collated into a website which I have asked the Divisional Recorder to send details to all Conclaves so that their members can enjoy these very short presentations on many subjects relating to this order. <https://www.redcrossofconstantine.uk>

Our annual donation to the Grand Sovereigns' Fund For Children will hopefully be approved shortly and will be sent on to London and this year I am pleased to reaffirm our close connection with the Craft in hopefully donating to their 2029 Festival and another close connection is to the Mark Degree and I am again pleased that another donation potentially has been given to their festival in 2033.

We receive back more than we give! In November I was contacted by an Organisation based in Leeds, but which covers all of Yorkshire, called Basecamp Adventure Trust, this supports children to build self reliance and personal resources in an intensive one year journey. After looking at their website and speaking to their manager I contacted the IG for West Yorks and we agreed a joint application for funds for 2 young people and as this money is being match funded by another supporter of the Trust, if accepted, this will mean that 4 youngsters will be able to realise their potential in the next year.

We also have a further submission pending for a smaller amount for a charity in the Scarborough area.

On the social front last year was slightly disappointing as the summer soiree was cancelled due to lack of attendees but we have organised another next year at a different venue and again it is on 26<sup>th</sup> July in the Pocklington area. Further details to be announced later. The Officers dinner, held in Pickering on 24<sup>th</sup> November was again a successful event moving from the north of the Division to the middle.

In July I attended the meeting of Grand Imperial Council where 2 of our knights were appointed to Grand Rank in the persons of Ill Kts Clive Copley and David Kirwan both from Roger de Mowbray Conclave but their year as a Divisional Generals and

their enthusiasm in every role they have been asked to play, made them exceptional candidates for the honour.

My thanks go to the Divisional Recorder V III Kt Geoff Nicholson , the assistant Recorder P Kt Geoff Mankin, the treasurer V III Kt Phil Ellenor for the way he keeps us all in check and the Div Registrar III Kt David Grisdale. I can not forget the Marshals team who have faced a steep learning curve this year.

I cannot let this address end without the mention of our Past Deputy Intendant Generals V III Kts Mike Osgathorp and Peter Shuker, both having both attained 50 years in this Order. They are becoming quite frail now. III Kt Neil Webster is another, although not frail he is suffering with a chest infection and is resting in bed.

Of course the one important person missing this year is our past Intendant General, R III Kt David Fox KCC who, although getting older and a little frailer, has some medical issues that prevent him from travelling very far. I am in regular contact with him and he is still positive about the outcome of his problems.

At this time of year, as well as those mentioned above, we must all be especially aware of our elderly or vulnerable members and neighbours and maintain regular contact so that they may remember and experience the masonic virtues of brotherly love, relief and truth that exist now, as always.

The Christmas period gives us all a time to pause, reflect and take time for family, sharing with friends and looking forward; but it is also time for remembering our basic Christian principles of love and compassion. Finally I thank you all for taking the time to be with us today I really do appreciate it. I wish you a happy Christmas and a healthy and prosperous 2024.

May God bless you and your loved ones.