

## **Provincial Grand Lodge of Somerset**

**Special Provincial Annual Meeting 15<sup>th</sup> October 2020**

**Clevedon Masonic Hall**

### **Provincial Grand Master's Address – RWBro David J Medlock DL**

Brethren, before I start my address I would be grateful if you would stand with me for a moment's reflection in memory of those who have passed to the Grand Lodge above during the last 18 months.

In particular, I will be remembering RWBro Douglas Burford who passed away on Tuesday.

Well my first year did not end as expected. However I don't believe it is due to anything I said, or did during the year, but I will apologise just in case!

I should like to place on record my grateful thanks to my predecessor who left me a fantastic team of Officers, and a Province which was, and hopefully still is in fine shape.

You have continued to perform brilliantly during the last difficult six months.

I will be forever grateful to my Deputy Ben, and our Secretary Roger for taking most of the strain during those first twelve months, and guiding me into the job.

Thank you to our Treasurer Keith, as the Province is in such good shape financially, it has enabled me to reduce the Provincial dues by 2/3rds for the coming year.

The Executive has been strengthened by the appointment of a Director of Care and Charity emphasising the work we do in these areas, and this has been particularly important during this pandemic when many of the Brethren have made huge efforts to not only look after their own Brethren, but also their communities. I cannot thank you enough.

To top it all we have almost completed a hugely successful festival when we will have raised over £2.7m. It has been pointed out that excluding interest the membership has raised more per head than we achieved in 2007. Yet we have also managed to contribute over £100,000 per year to our local charities.

It has been my great pleasure to officially appoint Clive Lambert, and Neil Hurcum today, two senior members of Somerset's Holy Royal Arch as Senior and Junior Warden. I am truly sorry you will not have a full year to enjoy the role which you both deserve.

I am also pleased to announce that I will be appointing Graham Puddy as Provincial Charity Steward, and Adrian Robson as Provincial Almoner.

It is without doubt that our Provincial Almoner, Ian Walker and Deputy, Steve Defries have carried out an outstanding job as almoners, and I cannot praise them, together with their team too highly. There are many whose lives have been made more comfortable due to your efforts, and the MCF's generosity.

Likewise, David Maddern has a hugely successful period as Charity Steward, and has been "rewarded" with a seat on the Executive. The appointment came at a crucial point, and your team has been successful in attracting a considerable amount of grants for various Somerset charities.

Sadly, I cannot invest Richard Winter as Assistant Provincial Grand Master today as planned, but I formally welcome him into what I consider the best job in Masonry, and recognise that despite the lack of meetings, he is getting stuck in, and zooming like he has been doing it for years.

As to the future I can only hazard a guess but my hopes for a resumption of normal activities by Christmas appears to be optimistic. I believe we have been lucky within the Province in the number of those infected by Coronavirus, but we still need to be vigilant.

However, we will need to think hard about how we can continue our Masonry in a form which is safe, and without putting pressure on our Members. The worry is that many will lose interest, candidates will give up the wait and natural attrition will reduce many Lodges to below a sustainable level.

To that end I intend to put together a team who will be available to support Lodges which are struggling, and to look both at short term, and long term plans. I would happily support Lodges who wish to merge, but understand that there are many hard decisions to be made, and compromises reached.

Sadly, because of the restricted numbers, Provincial involvement at Lodge Installations will be cancelled on a two month rolling basis. So that on 1<sup>st</sup>

November visits for January will be cancelled, 1<sup>st</sup> December those in February etc.

This is to comply with the 2 months, notice period required.

Amongst the many others I should be thanking, I will give special mention to Richard Parrish our Provincial Mentor whose ceaseless activity has kept the Brethren hanging on his every email.

Finally, I just need to announce that the Provincial Carol Service on 16<sup>th</sup> December will no longer take place as the restriction in numbers would have made it impossible to welcome everyone as intended.

Please Brethren, stay safe, and well, look after each other, and lets all hope we will be back together with renewed strength and purpose.

David Medlock

Provincial Grand Master