

Companions, today we should be gathering in the Masonic Hall, Beverley Road to enjoy our Annual District Meeting and a sumptuous lunch with colleagues and friends. Sadly, we cannot, so I address you all from home.

It is with regret that I start this address with the announcement of the passing of Ill Comp John Barry Wilson on Sunday 31st May. Barry became a member of the Order in 1995, joining the William Henry Bound Council and would have been Installed as TIM of the Captain James Cook Council on the 20th April 2020 had circumstances permitted. I would like to pass on my, and the District's, condolences to Barry's family and to all those Companions who have lost loved ones during this pandemic; may they rest in peace. On the 17th February 2020, I attended the funeral of R Ill Comp David Cordell, a much loved and respected Freemason, and I would ask you to have a moment of reflection on their sad passing.

On a happier note, I trust and hope that the rest of you and your families are well and coping with the difficult circumstances we find ourselves in.

As a District we are in very good health. I thank all of my Officers of the year and the Companions for their dedication and hard work on behalf of the District. This was evident when, at the DGM Annual Conference in January, it was revealed that we, in North and East Yorkshire, had the highest percentage increase of members by 12.2% and memberships by 11.11%. Well done to you all, a great achievement.

I now confirm the re-appointment Ill Comp Stephen Priestley as Deputy District Grand Master and Ill Comp. David Spivey as Principal Conductor of the Work together with the rest of my active District Officers, both new and old. I congratulate you all and thank you for accepting your Office. I look forward to working with you.

During the course of the year I, and others, have had the pleasure of attending many of our sister Districts. I would like to place on record my thanks to the District Grand Masters, and their companions, for warmth of the reception we received and the hospitality shown to us. In particular the visit to Warwickshire, where we were joined by Deputy Grand Master to celebrate the centenary of the Phipps Dorman Council 32 and if anyone can find their Gin, I would be grateful - he was a member of a brewing family!

On 30th October 2019, the Captain James Cooke Council, under the guidance of Ill Comp David Roach, conferred the Degree of Thrice Illustrious Master or Silver Trowel on Ill Comp Tadeusz Krawczyk. Congratulations to you and I trust you enjoyed the ceremony.

On the 25th November 2019, I attended the Grafton Council to witness Lawrie Lonsdale and David Alderson receive the Excellent Masters Degree or Ceremony of the Veils. I repeated the visit in February Graham Fenwick receive the degree. This time I had a speaking part as Keeper of the Second Veil, and I thank all at MMH for a very professional job. Well done!

On the 6th January 2020, I attended a Heads of Order Luncheon, which was hosted at Fulford Golf Club by the Craft PGM Jeffery Gillyon. It was a pleasure to meet up with old friends, some of whom are here today or would have been.

The cancellation of the Grand Council Meeting does not stop me from congratulating R Ill Comp James Newman on being reappointed as Grand Chancellor, Ill Companion Bob Patrick on his appointment as Grand Manciple and Ill Comps David Roach and David Spivey on their promotions to Past Grand Conductor of the Council. Well done to you all and thank you for your support.

As I have said before, we need the Craft, Chapter and Mark in order to further our Degree. It is imperative that we support these Orders and, in doing so, promote the Order of Royal and Select Masters. To that end, we have a Lecture Team only too happy to supply the link between the three degrees. May I take this opportunity to thank the PGM of the Mark Province of North and East Yorkshire, Comp Bob Clancey, for allowing us to do so in his Lodges.

In the normal course of events I would at some stage in this address have welcomed all of our distinguished guests and Heads of Orders within the District, so welcome to you all. You know who you are. However there are three names I would like to mention, those of Comp Graham Bailey, the newly appointed District Grand Prefect for the Allied Masonic Degrees in Yorkshire, Ill Comp Philip Ellenor OSM on the 20th June and Ill Comp Fraser McPherson, who will be appointed District Grand Master for West Yorkshire on the 2nd August 2020 all being well. Congratulations to you all.

In response to a communication from MMH, I have selected Comp Ken Eyre to give his thoughts and reasons on why he joined our Order. This will be for inclusion in the Mark Masons Hall Magazine. Ken was very excited when asked, I now wait with baited breath for the result.

I may be the District Grand Master but the District is yours, so look after it for me.

Stay Safe
Thank you and God Bless

Neil Woodward
District Grand Master