

Address to Division Grand Conclave April 2016

I want to start by thanking all of you for taking time out from your weekend to attend this meeting today both knights of the Division as well as our visitors and guests.

Divisional Grand Conclave is an important event in the Masonic calendar for members of the Red Cross of Constantine as it is the opportunity to bring together all of the members of the various Conclaves under one roof and thereby help to strengthen friendships and make new ones.

It is also of course the time when appointments are made to fill Offices on the Divisional Team which in itself rewards those who have been actively involved in their respective Conclaves and in the Division.

to look back for a moment since we last met as a Division:

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you who supported this Division in the Celebration of the 150 years of this Order back in May last year.

As you know this consisted of a service of thanksgiving which was held at the Lord Mayor's Chapel in Bristol followed by a luncheon in the magnificent dining room in Freemason's Hall Bristol.

We were honoured on that occasion by the presence of the Grand Sovereign, Most Ill Kt Graham Flight and were able to present to him a worthwhile contribution to the Grand Sovereigns Fund for Children of £3500.00.

This was fully appreciated by the Grand Sovereign and was only made possible by the generous contributions you all made both in your Conclaves and at this meeting towards the collection.

Don't forget that I have asked you all, via your Conclave Recorder, to suggest any ideas that you may have for the Division to make a claim on the funds, as the Grand Sovereign would be pleased to consider any appropriate organisation involved with the 'care of Children' as a suitable way of distributing the funds available.

The service in the chapel was conducted by our very own Divisional High Prelate, P Kt the Reverend Steven Hawkins in his inimitable fashion and was well received by all those that attended, both W Kts and their partners and friends.

My thanks are due in particular to those who helped to organise the event, these being, Ill Kt Derek Lerner, Ill Kt Basil Woodward, Ill Kt Ian Maxey, Ill Kt Ron Blackhurst. P Kt Steven Hawkins and Em Kt Andrew Baxter.

The help that was provided to us by Basil and Andrew in particular, from their knowledge and involvement with the workings of the Bristol Freemasons Hall and Steven from his dealings with the Lord Mayors Chapel was immeasurable and I do thank them personally and on behalf of those who attended for making this event so successful.

Next I want to thank those who made the journey to Lincoln to help the Grand Sovereign celebrate the 150th Anniversary of the Order in the Cathedral there on the 19th September.

I know that the Grand Sovereign appreciated the numbers that turned out for what was indeed a very special occasion and I am pleased to say that this Division was well represented by a goodly number of knights some of whom were accompanied by their partners, and when we found that a good number of us were in the same hotel not only with members of our Division but those from the West Midlands and the Devon and Cornwall contingent I hope that all will agree it was an occasion not to be missed.

Continuing the review of the year, I want to record the help and support given to me in particular and the Division in general by Ill Kt Ron Blackhurst, and although I have already personally thanked him I do wish to record here my appreciation of his past input and continuing contribution to the Order.

Ron worked fastidiously on the task of Divisional Recorder from April 2013, when I appointed him to the office up to May 2015, and as his replacement, P Kt Richard Cooper stated in his report, it took us all by surprise when it became obvious that due to his failing health Ron felt unable to continue in office just 6 weeks into what would have been his third term as Divisional Recorder.

At this juncture it goes without saying that I wish to record my thanks to Richard for taking the task on at short notice and given that I had only just appointed him as Divisional Junior General it was quite a commitment for Richard to take on board.

Although Richard was already a Conclave Recorder, he had only been appointed to that office in William de Irwin Conclave just 6 months before so I must say that it was a steep learning curve for Richard and he has taken to the task in an admirable and professional way and I do thank him for his hard work and support.

Today, this being Richard's first involvement in the organising of Divisional Grand Conclave he has taken the Recorder's task on board without the help of our Assistant Recorder, who has been whisked away by his wife on a special holiday, leaving Richard to cope alone, so congratulations Richard on a job well done.

The future

As reported by the Divisional Recorder just now, we are down by 5 on individual members year on year despite each Conclave regularly recruiting.

Deaths are outside of anyones control as are for the most part resignations especially when they are caused by members moving away or reducing multi-conclave memberships.

Nevertheless together we have recruited 5 new knights which for 7 Conclaves is a good result on top of the 11 we recruited in the previous year and I congratulate you all on this success.

We should be all aware that we need to look for every opportunity to encourage recruitment and I hope that your efforts to bring suitable candidates into the Order will continue with the same energy this coming year as it has in the past.

I should like here to thank the Conclave Recorders, Treasurers and Marshals for the sterling work that they do in organising the Conclave programmes and all of you for your membership and participation in the Order.

Divisional Team Visits

In 2014 I announce my intention to make three Divisional team visits per year the norm and these past two years have shown these to be well supported by the Divisional Team and appreciated by the Conclaves by boosting the numbers on the evening.

I thank all of those Divisional Officers who have joined in these visits most sincerely for their support, not forgetting the fact that it was at their own expense, in terms of travelling and dining costs, and I do appreciate that - believe me.

My particular thanks go to the Divisional Marshal, Ill Kt Ian Maxey and his Deputy Ill Kt Julian Frost, in organising the Officers and the Deputy Captain of the Guard, P Kt John Housden, now Captain of the Guard, in organising the Sepulchre Guard to turn out and support the Team.

We are now entering the third year of making these visits and my hope is that it will be as well supported by this years Divisional Team and Sepulchre Guard as it has in the past.

Today I want to thank all those knights who have served as a Divisional Officer in this past year.

I have a tendency at this point, rightly or wrongly, to identify individuals in the team whom I believe deserve a particular mention and I make no apology for continuing this trend.

First of all Ill Kt Norman Warry, the Divisional Eusebius, Norman has done a splendid job in representing all that is good about Masonry in general and this Order in particular and you will note that I have asked him to stay for a second year in that office.

To my knowledge this is the first time that this Division has asked a Divisional Eusebius to stay for a second year and I am please that Norman has agreed to do so.

You will notice that since he was 're-installed', just now, he has left us as he is now attending his grand daughters wedding, which by the way he asked her to move to later in the day, than she had already planned, so that he could come here first.

Thank you Norman for your support and for a job well done.

Other Divisional Officers worthy of mention are:

The Divisional Marshall, Ill Kt Ian Maxey, who has given a great deal of his time and traveled huge distances in fulfilling his duties, our Treasurer Ill Kt Alex Carter, who has continued to keep our finances in good shape, the Warden of Regalia, P Kt Dennis Hammond for his attendance on the issuing and receipt of the Divisional equipment loaned to the Conclaves for Appendant Order's ceremonies and last but in no way least P Kt John Housden and the Sepulchre Guard, who whilst not being Divisional Officers are nevertheless regarded by me as a very important part of the Divisional support to the Conclaves.

As their own commitments allowed the Guard have been particularly supportive in attending on the Divisional visits as well as at Enthronements and Appendant Order ceremonies.

Moving on now to the knights who have been appointed today.

The decision to appoint a knight to a Divisional Rank, either active or past, is taken in exactly the same way as any other order in Masonry and is made by examining the contribution to, and the progress made, by the individual in the Conclave and therefore is earned by commitment and not just by having held a particular office.

Therefore you should be justly proud of your achievement in obtaining your appointment today and I hope that it will serve as a reward for your efforts and encourage you in your continued support of your Conclave and the Division.

May I remind you that on Tuesday 5th July 2016 the Annual Meeting of Grand Imperial Conclave takes place.

I would encourage as many of you as possible to attend the meeting which will be held at FMH Great Queen Street London, starting at 12.30 followed by lunch, if you want it, served at 3.00 and a plan to finish by 5.00.

This will be an opportunity for you to support those knights from this Division, already mentioned by the Divisional Recorder, who will receive their first appointments to Grand Rank and in the case of Ill Kt Ian Maxey his promotion in Grand Rank to Past Grand Std B (C).

Now some thank you's:

Thank you to the Holy Peace Conclave for offering to hold this meeting 'under' their banner and the time and effort that they put in to arranging the furniture for today's event.

Thank you to the Divisional Stewards and members of the Guard who attended last evening to help in setting up for today and who I trust will also assist in the dismantling and re-arranging of the Conclave back to a Lodge Room.

Thank you to Sam and her catering team, in anticipation of the lunch we shall enjoy shortly, to Eve at the bar for her attendance and contribution and to the Nailsea Masonic Hall for allowing us to hire the facility.

At the start of today's proceedings I introduced our guests from other Divisions and the Heads of other Orders and would like to take this opportunity to thank them again for their support for this Division today and to thank them for the hospitality and friendship we have received from them on our visits to their Divisions and Orders.

Finally a special thank you to The R III and Em Kt Dr the Rev. Peter Blackwell-Smyth for gracing us with his presence today.

May you all have a happy year ahead, during which I look forward to meeting as many of you as possible in your Conclaves and again at the next Annual meeting of Divisional Grand Conclave in 2017.

For those unable to stay to lunch I thank you for your support and wish you a safe journey home.

For everyone else I look forward to your company at the luncheon in a little while from now.

Thank you.

R III Kt David J Palmer, Intendant-General. 16th April, 2016