

RSM Warwickshire District – DGM address November 2022

Companions, as the saying goes, time flies when you are having fun and I can hardly believe that it is already a year on from my Installation as DGM. That was a wonderful occasion and one of the first available to us following the restrictions and trials brought about by Covid.

This wretched virus is still in our midst but thank goodness we now have a plethora of vaccinations, treatments and expertise to fight it back and (for most but certainly not all) continue our lives almost as before.

I have of course already welcomed our special friends from other Districts and take this opportunity to thank them for the splendid welcome we receive when visiting their Districts.

My congratulations go to all those Companions whom I have appointed or promoted, and invested today as District Officers. I hope your year in office will be very special for you and that you will enjoy visiting many other Councils as part of the District team. You will be assured of a very warm welcome, but don't be surprised if you are occasionally invited to help out with an office, it's all part of the fun, but I do ask Councils to have the courtesy of giving "volunteers" a little notice, rather than dropping on them just before their meeting starts! My thanks must go to all those Officers standing down, but you will still be very welcome to join the visitations as "Officers of the Year" and will receive invitations accordingly.

Congratulations also to recipients of Grand Rank at the Annual meeting of Grand Council in April, ie to Acting Grand office Ill Comp Phil Gough as Grand Sword Bearer and Ill Comp Dennis Potter as Grand Manciple, and to Past Grand ranks Ill Comp Phil Wills as Past Assistant Grand Director of Ceremonies and Ill. Comp Dennis Freshwater to Past Grand Sword Bearer, with R.Ill Comp Doug Hopton promoted to Past Grand Chancellor, and Ill Comps John Handley and Joe McCullom promoted to Past Grand Conductors of the Council. This was an exceptional allocation from Grand Council helped by some catching up from lockdown and an extra rank for my appointment as District Grand Master. Unfortunately, there are never enough Grand Ranks to go round so those awarded are entirely due to the support, enthusiasm and commitment shown by the recipients.

Yet more congratulations go to those Companions to whom I have just presented their Silver Trowel Certificates. They enjoyed a magnificent ceremony, an experience I am sure they will never forget. The degree, which is that of the Installed Master, is one to which all Companions should aspire as a just reward for their service as Thrice Illustrious Master and their ongoing support for their successor.

Also, to Ill Comps John Baynton and Geoff Lates for their achievement of the very exclusive degree of Excellent Master, John back in February and Geoff later this month. This is usually conferred in London, with the allocation being just two per year for each District.

It is always a great delight to welcome new Companions and today we have Comp Keith Watkin with us, participating in the demonstration which follows. We have quite some catching up to do following lockdown but I am very pleased that we have seven candidates lined up to join various of our Councils, with hopefully more to follow. Companions, my mission here is quite simply to raise awareness of our tremendous Order. That's not difficult to achieve as it represents the missing jigsaw pieces of the Hiramic legend and joins all the

dots. Any mason who has shown his enthusiasm to include the Craft, Mark and Royal Arch will take little persuasion to move onto discovering those missing pieces, and I implore you to promote this awareness.

To this end, the splendid initiative created by our Dist GPCW, Ill Comp Chris Rogers, the Mark Ambassador Scheme, will assist greatly. Fully supported by our Provincial Grand Master in the Mark, this provides an Ambassador in every Mark Lodge in the Province, whose objective is to raise awareness of Royal and Select Masters in that Lodge. Very much like the Royal Arch Representative scheme in Craft lodges. And it works. At a Mark meeting I attended recently the new WM was a fairly new Royal and Select Master and, at the suggestion of the DC/Ambassador, took wine with all other R&S Masters. Several responded and there was an immediate buzz of interest amongst those unable to participate!

Companions, we have also introduced various other initiatives of great benefit, including the Council support team so ably led by our District DC Ill Comp Peter Stokes, and the District Relief Chest scheme which enables Councils to obtain gift aid on their charity collections, created by our District Assistant Recorder Ill Comp John Hayward, who also organises our very popular Sunday lunch each year. I always stress that the money raised by Councils using this scheme is entirely for them to decide where to send, and our new District Almoner Ill Comp Paul Fernandez-Montes will oversee the scheme to ensure Councils have a complete record of their funds.

Upon appointing our District Lecturer Ill Comp John Handley last year I mentioned that he might like to think about creating papers and presentations of interest to Councils short of ceremonies, and a presentation to Mark Lodges or RA Chapters to stimulate interest in our Order. He has been working enthusiastically on these and we now have some splendid presentations available with more to follow.

My hearty thanks go to not only those enthusiastic and imaginative Companions mentioned, but to everyone who forms part of a great team. The big players such as our District Recorder Ill Comp Chris Denley and District DC Ill Comp Peter Stokes, together with their own teams, are the engine room for all our activities and subsequent enjoyment, and I really can't thank them enough, on behalf of us all, for all the time, energy and commitment they put in. Well done all!

Companions, I have chosen the Craft 2023 Festival as this year's charity as this will be the last opportunity for us to support it. Do please take advantage of the tax add back available and I thank you in anticipation of your generosity. The collection will be made upon leaving the room.

In conclusion, I do hope you all have a very happy and peaceful Christmas as we come to the close of 2022, may the Supreme Master of the Universe watch over us all in 2023.

We will shortly adjourn for lunch, which I do hope you will all enjoy, but prior to then I call upon the District Grand Recorder to enquire whether we have any further business to consider.

We now have some entertainment for you. I call upon Ill Comp Peter Stokes.