

## AGM PRO PROV'S ADDRESS TO THE PROVINCIAL AGM 2024

“Good afternoon Brethren,

Firstly, congratulations to all those who have just been appointed, reappointed, or promoted in or to Provincial Grand Rank. As you all know, appointment and promotion is not just a thank you for past services, but also an encouragement to carry on your efforts, for which the Province are extremely grateful.

I am also pleased to be able to tell you that, in the last five days, two very worthy brethren were presented with the Provincial Grand Master's Award of Merit.

Last Thursday W Bro John Keith, Past Provincial Senior Grand Warden received from me on behalf of the RW Provincial Grand Master, his certificate and badge, whilst doing the job he has done for the past twenty years of managing and distributing the Craft summonses for members of the Executive. John is now in his eighties but continues to perform his task with the energy and diligence of a man twenty years younger. It was John's birthday yesterday, but as his favourite restaurant does not open on Mondays, he has taken a well-deserved day off to celebrate today.

Yesterday, I was at the Installation of the new Metropolitan Grand Master but the Deputy Provincial Grand Master, VW Bro Jim Mitchell was dispatched to Staines St Mary's Lodge on behalf of the RW ProvGM to present the ProvGM's Award of Merit to W Bro Ray Blowers, Past Provincial Grand Registrar, who, for as long as I can remember, has raised large sums of money through events and activities that he organises, on a regular basis, for not only Masonic but also Community Charities. He epitomises the Grand Master's message of Freemasonry being involved in the community.

Brethren, I am sure you will agree that both of these recipients are very worthy of the honour bestowed upon them.

Brethren, it really is good to see so many of you here today, surely an indication that the long term effects of Covid are, at last, beginning to wane.

It has been a very busy seven months, 12 days and about half an hour since my installation as Pro Provincial Grand Master.

We have, once again, published the activities of the Province during the past twelve months in what will become a regular annual review document, which underlines the extent of our work.

The review book has grown significantly in size, widening the coverage of, not just our ceremonies and social activities, but member achievements, and our footprint in the wider world, serving communities, benefiting charities and promoting other worthy causes, both Masonic and in the community.

Today also marks the launch of the new Provincial website, the new site is significantly faster to access, it is easier to use (even I can do it), and technically up to date, and can be found at [middlesexfreemasonry.org.uk](http://middlesexfreemasonry.org.uk), and which will, eventually, take over, over a period of time, the current [pglm.org.uk](http://pglm.org.uk) domain name. A further stage will be launched in the next few weeks, refreshing the members' area with an improved access to on-line payments for events.

We have recently introduced the 1870 Committee, named after the date the Province was founded. Under the chairmanship of Nigel Codron, this committee will look after an enhanced social events programme, which is aimed at not just our members, but their families and friends.

The first of these events will be held at the Great Cockcrow Railway at Chertsey on Saturday 6th July, where there will be a barbeque, stalls, activities and, of course, train rides, and is being held in conjunction with the Shooting Star Hospice for children. All are welcome.

And on 21st July at Brooklands, John Tye, a former Concorde pilot, will be talking to us about his experiences flying the world's fastest passenger aircraft. This will be followed by lunch and the opportunity of going aboard the Concorde at Brooklands. Once again, an event open to all.

The PGO Club was held for the first time at the Lensbury Club in Teddington, and at which the Middlesex Cares initiative was launched by W. Bros Ian Ferguson and Ivan Chu.

Middlesex Cares will provide assistance and support for our members' physical wellbeing, PSA testing, information on disabled access, provision of first aiders, fitness classes and mental health to name just a few, as well as launching a Lodge buddy system and the provision of buses from our Centres to major Provincial events, if and when required.

Perhaps, most importantly, our membership challenge is beginning to show positive signs. For the first quarter of the year we have seen 41 new initiates, a net increase of 31 craft memberships since the end of December, no initiate from 2023 has yet resigned, a significant, positive trend, our Province's craft membership growth is now slightly above the UGLE average. All very positive indicators.

In conclusion, the Craft and Royal Arch Executives have been combined, many of the challenges and problems that arise are similar, if not the same, and working closer together, I believe, will provide better solutions.

In line with this decision, you will have seen from the front page of the Review book that we are refreshing the brand mark and guidelines of Middlesex Freemasonry to make our messaging clearer and more consistent across all functions of the Province.

And we will gradually be phasing out Provincial Grand Lodge of Middlesex and Provincial Grand Chapter of Middlesex to the better understood term of Middlesex Freemasonry, which we believe more appropriately describes who we are and our ability to be found on the internet.

To that end, we will also be phasing out the Royal Arch brand and uniting it under the same banner of Middlesex Freemasonry.

I would like to thank all those who have worked so hard this year in assisting with the management of the Province and the changes that are being made. I would also like to thank the Provincial Grand Secretary, Andy Wright and the team of volunteers in the Provincial Office, The Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies, Mark Millard and his team of Provincial Deputy GDCs, together with the Provincial Grand Stewards of Prince Michael of Kent Lodge, and the Provincial Grand Tyler, Tom James, for the organisation of the ceremonial and associated logistics for this meeting.

Finally, I wish to thank every member of the Province for your support of our Provincial Grand Master, the members of his Executive, and myself.

I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at the various events being held throughout the coming year."