

## **Provincial Grand Masters Address to the Provincial Grand Assembly** **2011**

Brother Royal Ark Mariners this is the seventh Provincial Grand Assembly of Royal Ark Mariners to be held in Somerset and may I again welcome the many visitors and guest from the adjacent Provinces especially the Provincial Grand Masters who have supported me today, together with all Royal Ark Mariners who have taken the time to join us here in Nailsea. It is very gratifying to see that this Provincial Assembly has grown in popularity which is very much down to you Brethren of the Province of Somerset. You have all shown an enthusiastic desire for a separate Provincial meeting for this Order whilst we all appreciate that it is a requirement that being a Mark Master Mason is a prerequisite to being Elevated into this degree we all understand that the Order can exist on its own. As it did many years ago before being taken under the patronage of Mark Grand Lodge under the guidance of Cannon Portal the then Grand Master. Certainly Brethren I am extremely happy that we exist side by side with the Mark Degree as I do witness the superb Mark Fellowship flowing into the Royal Ark Mariner Lodges, and long may that continue.

We are again assembled here in this lovely Temple in Nailsea and Brethren I am very pleased to report that this very special, beautiful, and inspiring Degree is progressing well and flourishing within the Province of Somerset. I have been particularly pleased with the very high standard of ritual that is delivered in Lodges throughout the year. As I am extremely privileged to sit with the newly Elevated Brother at the festive board, and without exception, they all appear to be enthusiastic about the ceremony they had undertaken and many are surprised at its simplicity but appreciated its thought provoking script. Brethren it is very important that all Royal Ark Mariners within this Province take up the mantel of Lodge mentor and ensure that our new Members are made to feel welcome, made to feel part of our Ancient and Honourable Fraternity, and made to feel that they should pick up the ritual book to partake in our deliberations. I am confident that this simple message will be acted upon by all the Brethren present this morning, but please also take this request out to your respective Lodges as it is important and indeed essential to retain the Membership of our new and younger Brethren.

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At this Provincial Grand Assembly meeting it is my privilege to appoint and invest Past Commanders with Provincial Royal Ark Mariners Grand Rank in recognition for their hard work in their individual Lodges as well as the support and work they do for the Province. It is always a great pleasure for me to invest them with their distinctive collaret, and I sincerely hope they will wear it with pride especially at their Mark meeting so that Brethren who have not taken the next step in their Masonic career can see and meet senior Royal Ark Mariners whom they can seek information about our Order.

I do congratulate the 6 recipients of Provincial Royal Ark Mariner Grand Rank that I have invested today, and I urge them to use their new status in the Order to encourage and promote the degree both in their Mark Lodges and within the Mark Province. I also charge them to ensure that within their individual R.A.M Lodges they encourage new Members to partake in the ceremonial and ritual of the Lodge. It is especially important to ensure that new members are introduced to the Tracing Board and are encouraged to learn portions of this lecture, which I require to be presented in each Lodge at least once during a masonic year. It is a wonderful piece of informative ritual that can be divided into several portions thus enabling a number of Brethren to be involved in its presentation.

At the Grand Assembly held in the Grand Temple, Freemasons Hall, Great Queen Street in London on the 9<sup>th</sup> December 2010, the Pro.Grand Master M W Bro John Hale invested WB Tony Fisher of the Irwin Lodge, WB John Allan of Herbert Fuller Lodge and WB David Veale from the Exmoor Lodge as holders of Royal Ark Mariners Grand Rank this is a singularly high honour that is conferred by the Grand Master on Brethren who have given dedicated service to the Order, and I am certain that you will join me in congratulating these three Brethren on their preferment, all three have worked extremely hard in their own Lodges and have given great support to the Province of Somerset.

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One of the successful events I have introduced during the last 3 years is to take the Provincial Officers of the year on a fraternal visit to individual Royal Ark Mariner Lodges in Somerset. We have on these occasions been warmly welcomed by the Brethren and suitably entertained with good ceremonies and occasionally we are treated to an interesting rendition of the Tracing Board. I shall continue to plan these fraternal visits in the ensuing year and this year I have been asked by the Nailsea Lodge of Royal Ark Mariners to dedicate a new Banner which has been made and presented to the Lodge, and which can be observed on the rear wall of this Temple.

Throughout the Masonic year, as our constitution dictates, each Lodge elects a Brother to preside over them as the Worshipful Commander, and the Province is always pleased to attend the Installation meeting and deliver the address to the new Commander. May I use this assembly to remind the Past Commanders that after their year in the chair they still have much to contribute to the Lodge as there are many positions that need to be filled by experienced and skilled Brethren such as Director of Ceremonies, Lodge Scribe, Treasurer, Chaplain, and Assistant Director of Ceremonies are but a few examples of important roles to be undertaken. However Brethren I would recommend that these prestigious Officers are not held for long periods as this will ensure that other Past Commanders will maintain interest in the Lodge activities and don't feel superfluous after their year in the chair is over. Whilst highlighting the plight of Past Commanders can I urge Brethren to support and if possible join the Somerset Commanders Lodge No.1652 which should be a perfect arena for Past Commanders to meet debate important subjects and further the interests of our Order for the benefit of Royal Ark Mariners generally as well as the Province of Somerset.

At this meeting I have been well supported by a number of Provincial Grand Masters together with Brethren from the adjacent Provinces, some of whom have travelled many miles to join us today.

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It has also been a great pleasure for me to welcome WB David Jenkins our Provincial Grand Master in the Craft who is a member of the William Long Lodge No.191 and who will be standing down from office shortly, and I would like to take this opportunity today to express the best wishes of all the Royal Ark Mariners for a happy retirement and good health for many years to come.

As I have already stressed Brethren the success of this Royal Ark Mariner Assembly is due in no small part to the enthusiasm, dedication and support of the Somerset Brethren together with our visitors from the adjacent Provinces who have supported this annual meeting for the last 7 years. I would however wish to thank the Provincial Grand Scribe WB John Morgan and Brother John Winston the Deputy Grand Scribe for all the hard work in organising the administration for this meeting today and also to thank Brother Ray Johnstone Smith the Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies and the Deputy and Assistant Grand Directors of Ceremonies for planning and arranging the ceremonial of the meeting. These meetings do not just take place Brethren, but require many hours of preparation especially during the last few days before the actual date of the meeting. Brethren, I won't mention the naughty Boys who leave it to the last moment to book in for a meal!

It would be remiss of me not to thank our Provincial Grand Chaplain for the most delightful paper delivered at this meeting on the "Deeper Meanings of the Royal Ark Mariners Degree". Many hours of research and hardwork has been devoted to the preparation of this paper, so on behalf of us all Brother Vernon thank you for a most interesting and thought provoking paper.

May I also thank the Nailsea Lodge for the loan of the collars and necessary Lodge furniture, I would also express my appreciation to Nailsea Masonic Hall Company for allowing the Province to meet and dine in this lovely venue.

I would also wish to thank within this Assembly our Deputy Provincial Grand Master for his hard work in managing our Web-Site which has proved to be an invaluable tool in

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promoting the Degree, keeping Brethren informed of reports and news items around the Province and also providing a very efficient method of providing information and administration forms for the Lodge Scribes to access which is saving time and postage.

You will I hope have noticed Brethren that our Provincial Banner has had a make-over and this was undertaken by Mrs Vanessa Johnstone-Smith the Wife of our Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies and I would ask Brother Ray to take our appreciations back to his Lady who has transformed the banner with some fantastic needle work.

One other Brother I would also wish to thank for his dedication and enthusiasm is WB Derek Wilton the preceptor of the Lodge of Improvement who has on several occasions responded to requests from Lodges who were unfortunate not to have a candidate for the evening, to provide a Team of Brethren to present the Tracing Board or alternatively he has presented papers relating to the Royal Ark Mariners Degree. This has been a service to Lodges in the Province which I know is very much appreciated and I do thank WB Derek for taking the time to organise and arrange visit by the Members of the Lodge of Improvement.

Finally Brethren I would wish to thank you all for your close attention to my address, and also for the courteous manner in which you have all have received me and my Provincial Officers this morning. May the Supreme Commander of the Universe bless you all and keep you safe in his earthly Ark, show you at all times the beauty that surrounds us in our daily life, and give us all wisdom to comprehend the correct path we must take in dealing with the trials and tribulations which confront us every day.

**Thank you Brethren.**