

I must begin by thanking you all for attending our annual meeting in such excellent numbers. It is very encouraging for us all, especially the recipients. It adds greatly to their enjoyment when they see their friends coming to support them. I do appreciate that it is continuing to be difficult to plan visits to London and elsewhere. Hopefully things will improve in the future.

As I have already said, today is a very special day for the Brethren who have just received their first Grand Rank and also those who have been promoted in Rank, we can all just about remember the day when we were in the same position! I do hope that these honours will encourage you to continue with your good work, it is very much appreciated especially by my Prefects and myself.

This year has seen the retirement of R.W.Bro. Peter Brockbank, the District Grand Prefect for Kent, he has given devoted service to both his District and to the Order in general for which I thank him. In consequence of Peter's retirement I installed, on 18 February, his successor, R.W.Bro. Brian Alan Ward, and we wish him well in his new job.

On Wednesday, 15 March we went to Constable country in East Anglia and Consecrated the Dedham Vale Council No. 284, to meet in Clare; another very enjoyable and happy occasion, So our Order continues to grow. Plans are in hand for two new Councils, one in Thessaloniki in Northern Greece, and another on the Island of Malta. We have also had a request to repon two Councils in South Africa, all good news Brethren.

The development of the Order is due in no small measure to all the hard work which our District Grand Prefects put in, not only in their own Districts but also in supporting their colleagues at their District meetings across the country. It makes such a difference and shows genuine commitment to our Order, thank you all, keep up the good work. 17 November marks the retirement of R.W.Bro. Eddie Crosby as

the District Grand Prefect for Cumberland and Westmorland. He has served this large District well over many years. On the 18th I will have the pleasure of installing as his successor, W.Bro. Lawrence Hind.

We wish Eddie well for the future.

Brethren, time passes so quickly, it does not seem that long since I had the pleasure of investing the officers of the year and here I am thanking them for the support which they have all given me over the last twelve months and for their friendship, which I know will continue in the future. I must make special reference to our Senior Warden, R.W.Bro. Michael Spencer, who is having serious health problems at present, we all wish him well for the future and will keep him in our thoughts and prayers, I know he will be thinking of us today.

The Grand Master then welcomed Heads of the Companion Orders and visitors from overseas before continuing:

I am now commanded to bring you all the very best wishes of our Past Grand Master, M.W.Bro. Michael Herbert, Michael now finds travelling to London very difficult and though he made the supreme effort to come to the Royal and Select Masters celebratory meeting, he finds it very draining. I shall, as always give, him a full report on Wednesday, but his bush telegraph is possibly better than mine !

Brethren, recent major events and there have been some extra large ones this month, have obviously given the Grand Secretary and his team some headaches. But as we have come to expect they have risen to the occasion, letters of appointment have been delivered, follow ups done, and designated seats reserved, hopefully the right ones. We are therefore indebted to the Grand Secretary and all his staff for their hard work and they deserve our thanks, well done.

I had not better forget to thank the Grand Directors of Ceremonies and their teams for the professional manner which they have

undertaken their duties. All has gone according to plan and you to can go home fully satisfied in the knowledge that your hard work has paid off, again well done.

The Grand Master concluded his address by thanking everyone for their support, and wishing us all to continue to enjoy our Allied Masonry as much as ever.