

Thank you, W. Bro Norman, for those (I think!) kind words!

I have here a few photos of Norman and I at Training School, when we were younger, and before he became posh with his MBE! Should you wish to see them.

I start by thanking all of you for attending tonight, a fantastic turnout for which I am very grateful. Brethren, before making my customary announcements I should like to bring you up to date with some parish notices.

Firstly, our 2030 Festival breast jewels, thank you sincerely to those who have already donated to the Festival and purchased a jewel. I acknowledge these are expensive and, to help spread the load, we have made them available in instalments via the website. For those who have not yet purchased on please consider it as the money, as you know, will go towards our 2030 festival total and ultimately to charities and good causes. You can make purchases today, brethren, for any of the items we have for sale via the credit card reader should you wish.

A big "Thank You" to those who have already organised and those who have attended the 2030 meals that have taken place around the Province. Please keep an eye out of Facebook or the website for further events. Whilst talking about Facebook, brethren, if you are a Facebook user and not signed up to view the Provincial Facebook page, please do so.

I hope you have had an opportunity to view some of the other items on display today, if you are asked what you want for Christmas, please consider one or our new shirts, t shirts or fleeces. Or other items on sale in our web shop. Don't forget we have lots of preloved regalia for sale as well, not just for the Mark but most other Orders as well as other Provinces. If you have regalia you know longer use and would like to donate it please see W. Bro. Steve Joslin.

You will have, also seen the Mark Token Banner, once all the tokens have been sold, we intend to display the Banner at as many meetings as we can, again all proceeds go towards the 2030 Festival. You will have heard about the new "Provincial Maul" that has been made and now displayed. Each Lodge in turn will be presented with the Maul for use at their meetings before it is transported to the next Lodge. It will take, from the first presentation to Constantine Lodge early next year, until 2030 for the Maul to travel around the Province and end up at the Provincial Meeting at Felsted in 2030. We will be asking Lodge members to donate any small change to the Festival when their Lodge receives the Maul.

Moving on, W. Bro. Dave Todd and 5 other brave members of the Province, John Finlay; Paul Busby; Geoff Newman, Steve Joslin, and Les Irvine (nice to see you back in the fold Les). will be undertaking a zipline challenge event on the 16th April, 2022 at the Bluewater Centre in Kent and will be seeking sponsorship.

There will also be a meal in the evening at Rochford Golf Course for partners and wives. More details will follow on how you can support this event.

Brethren, you will recall we launched the use of Amazon Smile some time back and I would like to reinforce its use today.

There are 50 envelopes with an Amazon Smile stand and a number of cards inside. Each envelope is marked with a Lodge Number and has a simple set of instructions attached.

We would like members from each Lodge attending today to take the relevant envelope back to their Lodge and promote the scheme. Those in multiple units can take more than one envelope.

We will have some members handing out the envelopes as the brethren leave.

The envelopes not taken tonight will be posted out at a later date.

Here are some Quick Facts regarding Amazon Smile:

Amazon donates 50p for every £100.00 of the eligible amount spent by a customer to the customers nominated Amazon Smile Charity.

Amazon has donated £3.5 million pounds to nominated UK Charities to date.

UK customers spent £19.5 billion with Amazon in 2020.

It is simple to set up within your own Amazon account, there are no changes to the account, nor does it incur any additional charges.

Essentially it is “free money”!

Please support us.

Lastly, brethren, I hope you have had the opportunity to view and even buy one of the new Mark Tokens. I trust you like them and, again, the money from the sales will go towards the 2030 Festival. Thank you to those involved in their production, in particular Geoff Newman and Richard Goodwin.

Please remember it's the donations you make that help the MBF support other Charities, for example the recent £1.2m to hospices around the Country, and, locally, supplying equipment for Clowns in the Sky.

Before we move on, I would like to thank W. Bro. Vince Bull for his time as Provincial Deputy D.C., Vince has asked to stand down due to family and work commitments and so today will be his last duty as Dep DC.

So, “thank you”, Vince for your help and hard work over the past few years. With Vince's retirement it obviously means I need to fill that office, so I have

appointed W. Bro. Steve Joslin as Provincial Deputy Grand Director of Ceremonies, so congratulations to him.

Brethren we now move onto the appointments for the next year

For Provincial Grand Junior Warden. This brother has been a member of the Mark Degree for 16 years. He is a member of 5 Mark Lodges and has been a Founder of two of them. He was also one of the first to join the re-established Fillebrook "Fine Dining" Lodge.

He is the Secretary of his mother Mark Lodge as well as one other and Assistant Secretary in another. He received his first Provincial Appointment in 2014 as Assistant Grand Director of Ceremonies and has held further active Provincial Ranks and Offices since 2018.

He is a member of two Royal Ark Mariner Lodges, Treasurer in one and Asst. Secretary in another.

This brother looks after all the official visits not only for the executive members of the Province but also all the active Provincial Officers, he also coordinates all the visits to other Provinces.

As an acting officer he attends most of my official visits on top of all the other things he does. This brother has worked long and hard for his Lodges and the Province and to be Provincial Junior Warden is a fitting reward for his hard work and dedication

Brethren in case you haven't guessed by now my nomination for Provincial Grand Junior Warden next year is W. Bro. Robin Morley!

And Now Senior Warden. Brethren, this brother has been a Mark Man for 37 years! He is a member of 4 Mark Lodges and 3 Royal Ark Mariner Lodges. As well as being a member of many other Orders.

He has been a Founder of one Lodge and again was one of the first to join the re-established Fillebrook "Fine Dining" Lodge.

He was promoted to Acting Prov. Junior Deacon in 2011, Prov. Junior Overseer in 2016 and Provincial Grand Master Overseer in 2020 as well as taking on another Acting Office.

He has been a member of the 3R's working group since it was put together and is at all meetings. He has worked to create the health register spreadsheet for the Province. He has assisted with the arrangements for some Festival 2030 events and is planning for events in 2022.

This brother is also an excellent supporter of the Mark, if I said he was also the Dep. Grand Chaplain in the Province and as such has recently delivered the Oration at the Bible Dedication for Northern Star I am sure you will all guess my nomination for Provincial Grand Senior Warden next year will be

W. Bro. Gordon Maclean!

Lastly Brethren, my nomination for Grand Steward if we are to receive this appointment next year. This brother has been a Mark Man for 12 years. He is a member of 4 Mark Lodges and an Honorary Member of a further three Lodges.

He is also a member of 4 Royal Ark Mariner Lodges and was one of the leading lights in the reestablishment of the Fillebrook DC's Lodge. Including Mark and RAM, he is a member of eight Orders holding Provincial (or equivalent) Rank in six.

This brother has held Acting Office since 2015. He has also been a member of the media team, as well as the web master for a number of years. He started his Acting Officer service as Dep. Provincial Grand Secretary, he then moved from the dark side of admin to Dep. Provincial Grand DC and in 2019 became the Provincial D.C.

In that time he has been responsible for the Ceremonial of three Consecrations, two Reponements, three Banner Dedications and a Bible Dedication as well as the Ceremonial arrangements for the annual meeting at Felsted and the 1044 Installed Masters and Commanders meetings. He has escorted me on all my other official visits as well as helping Lodges with ritual whenever he could.

He has also had to put up with my pedantic insistence to get things right!

Brethren the promotion to Grand Steward is very well earned by W. Bro. Michael West.

Brethren, I hope you agree with me that each of these brothers deserve their just rewards having served us all well.

Congratulations to each.

Brethren thank you all for attending in such large numbers it so good to see you all again, Thank you to Tony Goater and the others who have had a hand in organising today, thank you to the "volunteer" stewards and those who organised the raffle. Stay safe brethren and if you celebrate Christmas have a good one and a happy new year to you all!

Thank you