Brethren, it is my great pleasure to stand this morning and to address each and every one of you. These past 12 months have absolutely flown by since I was Installed by the Grand Supreme Ruler last October, and quite a lot has happened in the past 12 months.

I, along with my Deputy V.Wy. Bro. Stephen P Holcroft, my Recorder Wy. Bro. Paul A Joynson, Provincial Grand Counsellor Wy. Bro Derek Oliver and Provincial Grand Chaplain Wy. Bro. Geoffrey Glover and on occasions, our partners have attended many Provincial Meetings around the Country over the past 12 months, and we have been made to feel very welcome at every meeting. I would like thank my fellow PGSR`s seated to my right, for taking time out of their busy diaries to be able to attend today and to support me and this Province. I would like to thank them for their company, their support, and I look forward to next year when those friendships can be carried on and built on.

Not every Prov.G.S.R. can attend every meeting, its an impossibility, and I would also like to thank all the Deputies, Recorders, and the many Distinguished Guests that represent the various Provinces who have taken the time to travel to Rochdale this morning. Brethren, you epitomise the true friendliness of this Order and I thank each and every one of you.

Historically, 2022 will be remembered for the sad death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, who has been in the lives of the majority of us, the year when we have had three Prime Ministers, and I am sure that it will pop up in several pub quizzes in the future, the shortest term of office of a Prime Minister.

2022 is also the year when the Masonic Suspensions, brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, was lifted. With the use of an excellent Vaccine program, social distancing and personal awareness, the Government managed to downgrade the various restrictions and both UGLE and MMH responded appropriately and face to face meetings resumed. During this time, I would like to thank the brethren of East Lancashire for the excellent manner in which this pandemic and restrictions was dealt with. The Conclave Visiting Deacons, the Provincial Guide and Provincial Deacons are to be congratulated and did an excellent job in contacting their various charges and although we still find some brethren are reluctant to venture out, we are finding that many have resumed their various Masonic interests.

However, we have some brethren who are still reluctant or slow in resuming Masonic Activity. Brethren, we proudly say that we are The Friendly Order, and we are unique in the fact that we have 4 Almoners…. They being the Visiting Deacons. These Visiting Deacons have a special charge and duty and it is imperative that they make contact, at least once, before every meeting. All too often, it is the Conclave Secretary who does the bulk of the work, mainly because of the practicality of booking meals and to fill the relevant offices.. ……..Could I ask that that each Conclave sit down and look at the membership, identify those brethren who they haven’t seen for quite a while and ensure that someone, albeit a Visiting Deacon or another member of the Conclave, takes ownership and actually makes contact with members identified has not attending for quite a while. That personal touch could be the spark to them realising what they have been missing, and could be the impetus in them attending future meetings. If we show an interest in them, they will hopefully show an interest in us. Too many times, we at Province have been asked to help in getting missing or reluctant members back. Sadly, I nor members of the executive, have a magic wand, but the Conclaves must bear a bit more responsibility and be a lot more pro-active and make actual contact with their members

This was highlighted to me, and actually hit home, when I had the absolute pleasure to be present at the recent Stafford and Shropshire Provincial meeting, when R.Wy. Bro. John Tewson P.G.Counc was presented with his 50 years in the OSM by the Grand Supreme Ruler. To all of those who know John, will know that he was an active member of many Conclaves and Provinces, too many to mention, but since the initial Lockdown in March 2020, he had self-isolated and would not leave the house. He had chosen his 50th has the occasion to come out of isolation, amongst the many good things that came out of that meeting, the one thing that I will always remember, was what John said after receiving his certificate, that he now realises that he had left it far too long, away from Masonry, and OSM in particular. He had only realised what he had missed when he was back amongst friends and enjoying the companionship that we take for granted. Brethren, it is down to each one of us to break that barrier and not to assume others are doing it. . As the old BT advert said, IT`S GOOD TO TALK.

The Retention of current members is very important, but the attraction of new members is our future. Craft Freemasonry is where we get our membership from, and they will only show an interest, and consider joining, if they know we exist. We, as a Province, are looking at putting a package together so that we can present it within Craft Lodges as an item of business on the summons. If any brother wants us to attend and do a presentation, could they please pass on the relevant details to the Provincial Grand Recorder. To help in advertising who we are, we now have Pop up Banners, as seen in the entrance as you entered the Masonic Hall earlier today, plus other various tools. Please, just ask.

The Provincial Website is an excellent tool in showing a wider audience as to who we are and what we are about. But that tool needs continuous information to keep it fresh, and I ask that if you have anything at all that you think is newsworthy or requires advertising, could you please send it to the Provincial Recorder. A small write up after a meeting or event, a couple of photographs is all we need, and from small acorns grow huge oaks….. we need to show everyone that we are active, and to maintain their interest once they have `hit` on our website.

Today, I have invested my new team of acting Provincial Officers and Congratulations to each and every one of you. I look forward to attending the various Conclaves during the ensuing year in your company. I appreciate that not every Provincial Team Visit may be suitable, bearing in mind business and personal reasons, but your support throughout the year would be most welcome and as I was always told a long time ago, you only get out what you put in. To those who I have invested with a Past Rank, either be it First appointment or a promotion, many congratulations to each one of you and may I thank you for what you have done and to your continued support.

We have the following dates selected as Team visits to the following Conclaves;

1. Feb 1st 2023 Bury Conclave No.80 Ashday Lea, Rawtenstall

2. April 20th 2023 Champion Conclave No.26 (Installation) Darwen MH, Darwen

3. June 5th 2023 Dr, James Edward Glover No.409 Rochdale MH

4. Sept 26th 2023 Freeman Conclave No. 57 (Installation) Stanley House, Audenshaw

We await confirmation to visit the Province of West Yorkshire, but that could possibly be Roses Conclave No. 459 in either June/July or August at Greenhead MH, Huddersfield.

To those who have just come out of Acting Office, brethren, may I thank you for your invaluable support over the past year. We have visited and supported various Conclaves and we enjoyed a trip to Huddersfield, when we supported the Province of West Yorkshire.

On Thursday 10th November I, and other members of the Province, will be attending Great Queen Street, London where we will witness the Annual Convocation of Grand Conclave. Several members of the Province will be honoured when they receive their First Appointment in Grand Rank or will be promoted, and if they are lucky, will be escorted within Grand Conclave by our very own GStwd, Wy. Bro. Paul A Joynson. Brethren, I am pleased to congratulate the following brethren….

First Appointment

Acting Deputy Grand Standard Bearer Wy. Bro Anthony Smith

First Appointment

Past Grand Sword Bearer Wy. Bro. Howard Freear

Past Grand Standard Bearer Wy. Bro. John Styles

Past Grand Bow Bearer Wy. Bro. Aiden Murphy

Promotion

Past Grand Visitor V.Wy. Bro. Peter Morgan

Past Assistant Grand D.C Wy. Bro. David Rigby

Re-appointed to Grand Organist V. Wy. Bro Paul Bowen

Brethren, a hearty congratulations from me and well deserved.

During the year, in November, we congratulated and celebrated with two brethren at Cockcroft Conclave No. 25… Wy. Bro. Ian Jeffrey Williams PAGDC and Wy. Bro. Albert Young PAGDC. both of whom achieving 50 years in Secret Monitor Masonry. A milestone in itself, but two brethren who are not only members of the same Conclave, but still attend and hold active office, was something unique and very special.

In July, we celebrated the 100th Centenary of The Supera Moras No.49 (The Internet) Conclave. Over 80 brethren attended Rochdale MH, where they witnessed the Grand Supreme Ruler presiding.

I have also had the greatest of pleasure in introducing the long awaited Provincial Grand Supreme Rulers Arch of Steel, and it’s wonderful to have them with us this morning. Brethren, you certainly enhance the proceedings, and I look forward to working with you throughout the year and in continuing its growth.

I am introducing a Gift Aid Charity Envelope scheme today, to be used throughout the Province. That we can enhance the Provincial Charity Account by an extra 20p for every Pound donated is a no brainer, and each Conclave is to be given a number of these envelopes along with a simple explanation on how it will work and what to do.

So we can take pride in our own Province, we now have an East Lancashire Provincial tie. They are reasonably priced at £15.00 each, details can be found on the Provincial website and by contacting the Provincial Recorder. As we go round the Province and the various Conclaves, we will have a number of ties with us for sale.

Brethren… this year has been a very busy year for the Province, starting from fresh and intent on getting solid foundations built. When I took over as Prov.G.S.R. I appointed a team to work with me and I am a firm believer in the right person for the right job, and the confidence to leave them alone with the minimum amount of interference by me. My ethos is to work as a team, and I think that this past year as proved just that. I would like to thank my Deputy, Stephen, for his support and friendship, for Dennis, the Treasurer, in his quiet efficiency, his sound advice when sought and the impeccable manner in which he as looked after the Province`s money. To the Prov.G.G Howard and the Prov.V.D`s for their due diligence, to my Prov G Counc Derek Oliver and Prov.G.Chap Geoff Glover who have represented me at Provinces to far flung away. Derek, I can`t thank you enough for all the help you have given me in representing me on the South East and South Coast and you Geoff for representing me on the South West Coast, but above and beyond is the help, assistance and guidance that I have enjoyed with my Recorder, Paul Joynson.

 I cannot tell you the number of phone calls, the length of each call and the ideas bounced about that have finally come to fruition. The time, effort and perfection he puts into everything he does (apart from the odd spelling mistake, which I`m sure he does to see if I`ve read everything) is remarkable, and nothing is too small or too big to take on. Look around today, you will all see what has taken months to do and Paul, I thank you for everything that you have done. I am extremely lucky in having these extremely competent Secret Monitor Freemasons around me, and I look forward to another productive year.

Brethren, may I thank you for the very kind attention you have paid me whilst giving my first address at Provincial Grand Conclave, and I wish each and every one you good health to enjoy your Secret Monitor Masonry, and that the same applies to your family and loved ones. Good news is no news, and with so much bad news going round at the moment, please, enjoy the rest of the day, tell everyone how much you have enjoyed the day and companionship, what they have missed, and travel safely home to your loved ones.

Brethren, I feel extremely humble but proud to be stood here before you all, thank you…………………