

DISTRICT GRAND LODGE OF SOUTH AFRICA, NORTH

Of Ancient Free and Accepted Masons of England



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Annual Meeting, District Grand Lodge of South Africa, North

DGM's Address – 7 October 2017

Brethren welcome to this our 122ND Annual Meeting of District Grand Lodge and thank you all for your attendance here today. Welcome to our distinguished guests and I will formally acknowledge you all at the end of this address. I do hope that you have enjoyed our Ceremony and that you will join us at the Festive Board following this meeting.

I also welcome those Brethren who have travelled far to be with us today. I am delighted to see the contingent from Mauritius comprising some 13 Brethren including the Master of Lodge of Friendship, W Bro Rajeev Nathoo; the Master of Phoenix Lodge, W Bro Koomar Gokulsing and the Senior Warden, W Bro Sanjay Ramgutti; and the Master of Protea Lodge, W Bro Shyam Mohadeb. They are accompanied by 5 Past Masters from one or more of our 3 Lodges in Mauritius, namely; W Bros Wilfrid Koon Kam King, PAGDC, Kumar Bheekie, Kailash Juddoo, Mustapha Adamjee and Esmael Patel, together with 3 other Brethren. I'm sure you will all enjoy your stay in Johannesburg. I would ask the Brethren from Mauritius to rise and Brethren please extend a warm welcome to our Brethren in the usual manner.

I would also like to extend a sincere welcome to some 11 Brethren from Swaziland, including the Master, W Bro Kobla Quashie together with the Senior Warden, Bro. Bob Mavhunga, and the JW, Bro Riccardo Nyoni, all of Swaziland Lodge. I also welcome W Bro Phesheya Malaza, Master and Bro Edward Fenwick, JW of St George's Lodge, Swaziland. They are accompanied by W. Bros Nigel Fenwick, Marcus Zbinden, Gazz Barlow and 3 other Brethren from both Swaziland and St George's Lodges. I also welcome the Master, W Bro Gerald Peinke and the Junior Warden, Bro Roger Hunt of Gaborone Lodge, Botswana together with Past Master, W Bro Tim Ellwood. I also welcome all those other Brethren who have travelled from the far reaches of the District.

Congratulations are extended to those Brethren who have received District Grand rank today and I look to you for continued support to your Lodges and to the District. Today is significant in that there have been several changes to senior Officers in the District. Congratulations are extended to **W Bro Christopher van Gaalen** whom I have appointed as Deputy District Grand Master. Unfortunately, Chris cannot be with us today for his investiture, as he is representing South Africa in a black powder, shooting competition in Australia. I will be installing W Bro van Gaalen at a meeting of Ionic Lodge here at Park Lane on Wednesday 25 October. I'm sure he will appreciate your support. I thank Very W Bro David Whitfield who is standing down as my Deputy, most sincerely for his service to the District and his insightful counsel and assistance to me. It is much appreciated.

I likewise thank Graeme MacKenzie who has stood down as an Assistant District Grand Master also for his service to the District. Graeme's business is taking him to the UK for greater periods of time and I wish him well with his business ventures. We welcome the two newly installed Assistant District Grand Masters, **W Bros Charles Burn and Simon Knutton** and wish them well in their new appointments. Both of these Officers are well-known and have had to stand-down from senior offices in the District. I thank **Charles Burn** for his excellent work as Treasurer and I welcome **Colin Richmond** as the new District Grand Treasurer and wish him all the best with this future duties. Likewise I thank Simon Knutton for his term as District Grand Director of Ceremonies and previously as Deputy and I welcome **André Ferreira** as the newly installed District Grand Director of Ceremonies.

W Bro Brian Kretzschmar has served as President of the Board of Benevolence for the last six years. A great deal has been accomplished through his leadership of the outgoing Board of Benevolence and I do thank him for his service and I wish him improved health in his retirement. I have appointed **Chris Adams** as President of the Board of Benevolence and he brings to that position a wealth of experience. I thank Chris for accepting this important office and look forward to working with him. Unfortunately Chris cannot be here today because of an overseas business commitment.

W Bro David Pickard has stood-down after 5 years in Office as Dist Grand Secretary. I thank him for his service to the District and wish him well in his retirement. I congratulate **W Bro Guss Southgate** who takes on the office of District Grand Secretary and I look forward in working with him. Guss is already familiarizing himself with the District Office.

I also extend my sincere congratulations to those Brethren who received Grand Rank earlier this year. The Most Wor The Grand Master was pleased to appoint W Bros. **Charles Burn, Richard Lipnicki** and

David Pickard to first appointments of **PAGDC** and W Bros. **Christopher van Gaalen** received a promotion to **PSGD** and **Cleve Wiehahn** received a promotion to **PJGD**. I look to them for ongoing commitment to the Order and to this District.

To mark the Tercentenary this year, The Most Wor The Grand Master has decided to make an additional two first appointments to Grand Rank and one promotion in Grand Rank. Recommendations for these celebratory ranks have been submitted and they will be announced later this year and the investitures will take place at the Quarterly Communication to be held in February 2018. These investitures will be in addition to the normal Grand Rank investitures held in April.

Brethren, our District is progressing well. As at 31 March, we had an overall increase of 3 Members for 2016 – 2017. Whilst this is an extremely small increase in terms of our total membership, nevertheless, it is an important movement in the right direction. At the 31 March, we had a total of **1887** Members including 148 Initiates, or 2216 Memberships when counting multiple memberships in our 101 Lodges. The total number of Royal Arch Members constitutes some 42% of the total Members in the District. Whilst I am still looking for growth in the Royal Arch, it does represent part of successive annual improvements over the past 5 years. ,

Whilst our numbers are looking healthy, we still have a number of ailing lodges. We stand to lose Edenvale and Fairview Lodges. Before the closure of a Lodge can happen in this District, it is expected that the first step to follow is to set-up a meeting with the District Grand Secretary, the liaising Chain and the District Grand Master, to clearly discuss the status of the Lodge and its future, prior to any attempt being made to close the Lodge.

The District was honored by the visit of the President of the Universities Scheme, RW Bro Sir David Wooton, Assistant Grand Master. He was accompanied by the Scheme Chairman, W Bro Edward Lord, the Deputy Chairman, W Bro Mark Greenburgh (now Chairman), and the Scheme's new Regional Coordinator for Africa, W Bro Gregory Jones.

At the beginning of the visit, W Bro Chris Adams, Past Master of President Lodge co-ordinated a workshop programme at which he outlined the progress which had been made in President Lodge and the difficulties encountered. W Bro Dr Daniel Wilke, a Past Master of Golden West Lodge, likewise outlined the progress being made in Golden West Lodge. Unfortunately, there were no full presentations

from members of the visiting delegation, but a useful question and answer session was held on the Universities Scheme.

I was delighted to welcome RWBro Jim Duggan, DGM of Western Cape, RW Bro David van Vuuren, DGM of Central Division, RW Bro James van Zyl DGM of Orange Free State and W Bro Paddy Roberts, Past AsstDGM for KwaZulu-Natal who were able to join us at the workshop and meet the London delegation.

The President of the Universities Scheme, Sir David Wooton and his delegation visited our two Universities Scheme Lodges, President Lodge and Golden West Lodge and were extremely impressed by the ritual work being carried out, particularly by the junior members of the Lodges. So much so, that they made notes for their Lodges in England.

I extend my grateful thanks to W Bro Chris Adams and the execo team from President Lodge who assisted with the social programme and gave tremendous support with transport during the visit. Likewise, I would like to thank WBro Brian McDermott and Dudley Poulton and their team for the assistance given from Golden West Lodge at the Willows in Pretoria. Grateful thanks are extended to Gerry Kock who kindly entertained the party at his Game Farm and W Bro Kobie Smit who organised transport. All in all, this was a very successful visit to our Universities Scheme Lodges.

These Lodges do need support at their regular meetings by visits from Grand Officers and senior officers in the District. If you have an evening free, do go along to their meetings. I think you will be pleasantly surprised.

I am delighted to report that the Connaught Club for Masons under 35, has had a very busy and positive year. Membership is currently 40 subscribing members and expanding, and a full social programme is in place. I would like to express my thanks to the Chairman, Bro Chris Mudditt, the Deputy Chairman, Bro Michael Wellbeloved, the Secretary, Bro Benjamin Krone and the Treasurer W Bro Verge Das Neves and their committee for the work they are doing. I have appointed W Bro Chris van Gaalen, DepDGM, to act as liaison between myself and the Club, and I thank W Bro Colin Robinson for his past services in this role and who has served as liaison since the inception of the Club.

This year, the Club organised a visit for Members, families and friends to the FORA (Friends of Rescued Animals) animal shelter at Krugersdorp. A great day was enjoyed by all, exercising and interacting with

the animals. The Club is to be congratulated in donating R 6 500 to FORA and a further R 5 500 was donated in kind in the form of usable goods, such as pet food, cleaning agents etc.

During the year, various charitable events were held including for example, donating blood and painting a class at a junior school, as well as fund-raising events including assisting at Corona's Box and Dine. Excellent to see the under 35's being involved in these events. Well done Connaught Club Members.

I am extremely grateful to Wor Bro Brian Kretzschmar, outgoing President of the Board of Benevolence and members of that Board, for the incredible amount of work that they have carried out during the year and thank them all most sincerely for their enthusiasm and effort. The Almoner's programme is going well and I am grateful for the oversight and scrutiny of applicants' needs given by the Board of Benevolence in all grant applications, where importantly a financial need must be demonstrated by the applicant.

Our major charity donations this year amounted to some R 870,000, which were announced at the District Charity Banquet in April, as follows:

- R 340,000 to Childline,
- R 330,000 to Oliver's House
- R 200,000 to the District Samaritan Fund.

A further R 244 000 was distributed at my discretion to various Lodges in the country areas as small donations to compliment various charity projects being carried out by Lodges in their areas.

Our assistance to Brethren and their families has not been neglected and is mainly carried out through the Transvaal Inter-Constitutional Masonic Charity (TIMC). The District is a major contributor and donated some R 192,000.00 to this Charity Fund during the year, which covers Benevolent and Education grants.

Benevolent Grants were given to 22 recipients in our District from a total of 51 recipients assisted by the TIMC, currently at R1 775.00 per month. In addition, an educational grant was given to 1 student from our District from a total of 3 recipients funded by the TIMC, enabling them to complete their University education. A maximum of R 34,500 per annum is allocated to each applicant depending, on the actual costs at the University or Tertiary Institute involved.

Renovations at Park Lane are continuing, but at a lesser extent this past year. I thank W Bro Chris Reynolds, Dist G Supt of Works for his management of projects, which have included establishing

electrical meters in the kitchen, and the decoration and replacement of lighting in the entrance foyer. I also extend my thanks to Wor Bro Tim Smith for his work in reorganizing and renovating the Library. This project is virtually completed. Thanks are also extended to the former District Grand Secretary, W Bro Pickard and the Tyler, W Bro Jerry Davies who have refurbished and replaced the furniture in the rehearsal rooms and hung pictures in the corridors of Freemasons' Hall. Our major task during the next 12-18 months will be to repaint the window frames and clean the exterior of the building. I doubt whether the window frames have ever been repainted in the building's history and we are busy investigating high pressure water cleaning of the exterior walls, but it is expensive.

This year, 300 years of English Freemasonry is being celebrated world-wide. Grand Lodge has encouraged Provinces and Districts and Lodges or groups of Lodges to organize their own celebrations, leading up to the Grand Lodge event in London at the end of this month. I would like to take this opportunity of thanking Wor Bro Graeme MacKenzie, Past Asst DGM who has stood down from initially chairing the Tercentenary Planning Committee and thank Wor Bro Simon Knutton, AsstDGM for agreeing to chair this Committee. I will have more to say about plans going forward.

Our local signature event was a concert held at the Linder Auditorium on Saturday 15 July 2017 conducted by the well-known musician Richard Cock. The event entitled "300 Years of Harmony" showcased music composed by Freemasons worldwide over the last 300 years. The event was enjoyed by all who attended, but the overall attendance at the event was disappointing. Thanks are extended to Richard Cock, the Conductor of the Orchestra and Choir, for the marvelous way he led the evening. I am grateful to Wor Bro Philip Heydenrych for his assistance in setting- up this event and to W Bro Simon Knutton, Lance Epstein and others who assisted in improving final attendances.

Helen and I were extremely grateful in being able to join in the Tercentenary Thanksgiving service organized in August by our Lodges in the Pretoria area. The service was held at the Chapel of the Masonic Haven at the Willows, Pretoria. Thanks are extended to the District Grand Chaplain, W Bro Dcn Dr Vernon van Wyk for leading an insightful service and to W Bro Brian McDermott, Leighton Shaw, Dudley Poulton and others for organizing the service. Hopefully such a service can be repeated in the future.

There have been several other events held in the District. A Photowalk through Freemasons' Hall was organised by Chris Adams with over 40 amateur photographers taking part, combining an educational presentation on Freemasonry and the freedom to photograph the interior and exterior of the building in

very creative ways. Chris Adams was ably assisted by Simon Knutton, Carl de Montille and the District Grand Tyler, W Bro Jerry Davies. The event also provided a useful training ground in answering questions about Freemasonry for planned Open Days in the District. A trial open day was also held at Doric Lodge in Polokwane and subsequently on 29th July, a number of co-ordinated Open Days were held at:

- The Willows Masonic Centre, Pretoria,
- Central East Rand Masonic Hall, Boksburg,
- Norwood Masonic Hall,
- Astrea Lodge at Waterval Boven, and
- Park Lane Masonic Hall, Parktown, Johannesburg.

Subsequently in September, a very successful open day was also held at the Phoenix Masonic Hall, Phoenix, Mauritius, where in excess of 100 visitors of the general public enquired about Freemasonry and visited the Lodge.

Each one of the open days gained public exposure through a combination of Press Releases and Handouts distributed at earlier events. The response has been clearly positive, measured by the numerous applications for membership arising directly from the events, and associated contacts with our various Social Media platforms.

Other events have been a Potjiekos Competition held by Lodge of Emulation at the Old Benonians Sports Club, A Whisky Tasting led by Simon Knutton here at Freemasons Hall for Hillbrow, Royal Edward, President Vrede and Baden Powell Lodges. I'm sorry I couldn't make that event.

Kosmos Lodge held an evening open to the general public "What happens at Lodge" which introduced members of the public to Freemasonry through a presentation and interaction with them at a Festive Board. The evening was an outstanding success. Well done Kosmos Lodge !

Lyceum Lodge of Research continues to do much for the District, primarily by offering workshops / seminars, mainly through the work of Chris Adams, Jeff Spiller and Dick Glanville. A presentation was organised earlier in the year from Dr John Wade, a former Prestonian Lecturer who presented a lecture "Go and do thou likewise" - a lecture on Masonic Processions. But the real feather in the cap of Lyceum Lodge of Research was the organization of a visit by the current Tercentenary Prestonian Lecturer, RW Bro Dr Jim Daniel, from the UK. who gave a lecture on "The Grand Design", *i.e.* "of being happy and

communicating happiness". Jim Daniel is an ex-Grand Secretary, a senior Officer in Grand Lodge and a real friend of our Districts in South Africa. He is an excellent speaker and the lecture was interesting. The only downside was that it was poorly attended by only 28 Masons – an embarrassment not only to the Lodge but also to myself and the District. In contrast, the Western Cape had an attendance at a similar lecture, of over 100 and KwaZulu-Natal over 70?

We have learned a great deal during this Tercentenary Year, especially learning to interact and bring Freemasonry to the General Public. But there is still a great to be done, to bring a greater understanding of Freemasonry and what it represents to the public, and going forward we want to build on this interaction. I will be shortly holding a meeting between W Bro Simon Knutton who has been actively involved with the Tercentenary events and interaction with the public and has ideas about Company sponsorship for charity. Together with Chris Adams, the new President of the Board of Benevolence who also has ideas about extending our involvement with Corporations and large companies to interact and to offer to organize charity donations, for tax credits. We will discuss the formation of a small working committee to drive these ideas forward.

Unfortunately, we still have some way to go with the miss-understanding from some of our own members. During this last year, I learnt that there were senior members in a particular Lodge who objected to one of their members who was trying to interact with the local town council and to bring charity work undertaken by the Lodge to the local community. They refused to have press photographs of Masonic charity events carried out in the local community, presented on their Lodge notice board. They even objected to the idea of bringing members of the general public to visit their Masonic Lodge in an open day. Brethren they were touting the old ideas of being over secretive, of refusing to open up at all and to explain Freemasonry to general society. Quite frankly Brethren, these views no longer have a place in English Freemasonry and are totally at variance with the views of our Grand Master, our Pro Grand Master, the Board of General Purposes and the Grand Secretary of UGLE and indeed, in this District.

Brethren, there is an administrative matter which I also raised in the Royal Arch meeting, which I would like to draw to your attention. I appeal to Secretaries of Lodges to send their Summonses to Senior Officers in the District, for all meetings- not just Installation meetings. District rules state they should be sent at least 10 Days before a meeting to all Chain Bearers, the President of the Board of General Purposes and District Grand Secretary, and if a Lodge meets here at Park Lane, then also to the District

Grand Tyler. This will allow the District Executive to see what work is being done in each of the 101 Lodges.

Lodges have had permission to send out the Summonses by email for some time and I would seriously suggest a separate mail list is set-up for those Senior District Officers mentioned – addresses are in the Installation book, available to all Lodge Secretaries. Brethren to illustrate the problem, there are 101 Lodges in this District and I only receive summonses from about 20. Communication is critically important not only between the Wor Master, Secretary and Members of the Lodge but also with the District. However, equally important is to note that senior District Officers do not want to be showered with internal matters of a Lodge, which should be addressed to members only.

Finally Brethren, I would also like to place on record my thanks to Rt Wor Bro Neil Molver, Past District Grand Master of Zambia, also a member of our District, who has kindly stood in as the Immediate Past DGM. I would like to express my thanks to the outgoing District Grand Secretary, W Bro David Pickard and Mrs Fern Rowles and the staff at Freemasons' Hall who are involved in the administration of our District. They together with W Bro Chris van Gaalen, Chairman of the Organising Committee and members of his committee and the DC, W Bro André Ferreira and his team, have all contributed to the success of this Annual meeting.

In particular, I would again like to specifically thank Very Wor Bro David Whitfield who has again skillfully managed the bookings for the meetings, the seating, the production of tickets and procession lists, despite some late changes. Kind assistance has also been given by W Bros Stanley Elms, David Johnson and the District Grand Tyler, Wor Bro Jerry Davies who have been working behind scenes.

I thank Garth and Rosemary Coskey of the Red Plumb Caters for their catering over the last 5 years. They will be leaving Park Lane at the end of this year and I wish them well in their future endeavours.

I look forward to the opportunity of meeting those who will be attending the Festive Board.

I wish you all a safe journey home

RW Bro Prof. E Guy Charlesworth
District Grand Master
7 October 2017,