



Provincial Grand Master Right Worshipful Stuart Hadler  
Address to Provincial Grand Lodge  
14<sup>th</sup> April 2011

I would like to thank you all for your presence this afternoon which has helped to make this a thrilling and memorable Meeting. It has been a great honour to have had the M W Pro Grand Master visit Somerset and humbling for me to have been installed by him today.

As you know, last year was a difficult year for Susan and me. The many letters, cards, flowers and other good wishes were most uplifting and I am pleased to tell you that Sue remains in remission and is doing very well.

Today I have appointed and promoted brethren in Provincial Grand Lodge and I take this opportunity to congratulate them on their preferment and also to remind them that this is not only a recognition of past services but brings an expectation that they will continue to actively support their Lodges and the Province wherever they can.

Brethren I am mindful that no honours system is flawless and that we should try and ensure that our system is as widely understood as possible and that our criteria are as transparent and objectively applied as we can make them. To this end I am reviewing our current arrangements to see where changes may be helpful.

In Compass magazine I paid tribute to the distinguished service of RW Bro David Jenkins. We were able to acknowledge this and thank him formally at a recent lunch attended by 120 brethren and their ladies. On your behalf he was presented with a set of regalia, a computer system and a limited edition water colour print. With all of which he is delighted.

We also acknowledged the essential support that Poo has given. She has taken a great interest in our activities and more particularly in meeting the brethren. In expression of our appreciation of Poo's support we presented her with a dress watch.

Brethren I formally record our gratitude for the loyal and dedicated leadership that RW Bro David has given this Province over the last 17 years as Almoner, Asst PGM and for the last 9 years as our PGM. We owe him a great debt and I'm sure you will join me in wishing him and Poo many more years of happiness and good health.

At the Annual Installation of Grand Lodge later this month RW Bro David is to be appointed a Grand Steward and he is also to be the Sword Bearer of Supreme Grand Chapter for the ensuing year.

A number of our brethren will also be honoured by the MW Grand Master:  
Receiving First Appointments as PAGDC are

W Bro Bob Biggs of Severn Lodge

W Bro Geoff Dolling of Queen's College, Taunton Lodge

W Bro David Martin of Lodge of Agriculture

receiving promotions are

Assistant PGM, W Bro John Winston to PSGD

W Bro Peter Ball of Wellington School, Somerset Lodge to PJGD

W Bro Reg Ferm of Sir Thomas de Cheddre Lodge to PJGD

Those receiving First Appointments in Supreme Grand Chapter as PGStdB are

W Bro Stephen Gale of Marine Lodge and Chapter; and

W Bro Alan Holton of Corinthian Pillar Lodge, Chapter of Brotherly

Love

We congratulate them all and wish them a happy and memorable day in London.

We have recognised W Bro Chris Summers loyal service as Prov GDC and I now formally record out thanks to him.

W Bro Steve Merryweather retires today as Asst Provincial Grand Secretary after 5 years service. Steve has diligently undertaken a number of key responsibilities and given invaluable support. Because he has worked away from Somerset much of this has been at the provincial office at weekends. W Bro Steve is unable to attend today, however we have made a presentation to him as a mark of appreciation and again I record our gratitude for his loyal service.

A change of PGM represents a new era, an opportunity to take stock, review and where necessary make changes and adjustments. Brethren that

process is underway and over the coming months I hope to announce a number of initiatives to enhance the support the Province can give to Lodges and to members generally. The aim will be to help make membership a more enjoyable, worthwhile and meaningful experience, to improve retention and promote freemasonry in the wider community.

There are many good ideas, untapped skills and expertise across the Province and I hope to find ways to draw on these resources for the benefit of the Province.

There are some specific matters that I would like to mention this afternoon.

### 1. Community Involvement

Since 2002 we have continued to seek opportunities to raise our profile and involved in our local communities. Most recently we have provided copies of our new book on 'Somerset Freemasonry since 1733' to civic dignitaries, public libraries, senior schools and universities across the Province. It has provoked many favourable comments.

Whilst some aspects of our activities need to remain private I believe that we can and should be seen to be an integral and valued participant in local community activities. Not necessarily through charitable donations but in practical ways and at events. I encourage you all to seek opportunities to put our principles into practice and communicate them through local involvement.

We have chosen to use the weekend of 25<sup>th</sup> June to focus effort on promoting Freemasonry in our communities and I am delighted to see many centres running events on or around that weekend. I wish them every success.

On a related matter I am pleased to report that the Community Bus is proving increasingly popular to community groups. W Bro John Cole manages the project ably assisted by a team of volunteer drivers. A number of lodges contribute to the running costs. It's a super project providing so much enjoyment and happiness to disadvantaged people and is, of course, excellent PR. Please speak to W Bro John Cole if you can offer practical or financial support.

At this point it is fitting to thank those who supported the very successful Variety Show at the Weston Playhouse last November. It raised a respectable amount for local hospices and we plan to do it again.

## 2. Masonic Charities.

In 2007 we held a most successful Festival for which you raised nearly £2.7m in support of the RMBI.

Shortly afterwards RW Bro David Jenkins launched “Regular Giving by All” in the knowledge that with a widespread commitment to giving in a tax efficient manner we could meet our commitment to central Masonic charities without resorting to a major fund-raising Appeal for future festivals.

Brethren, four years have elapsed and the take up so far has not been widespread. There are many factors that inhibit our good intentions to donate. Nevertheless our central charities continue to support those in need and in Somerset alone each week they provide £3-4,000 of support to our brethren and dependents. Given the economy the calls for help are likely to increase.

In 2020 we will hold a Festival in support of the Grand Charity which in addition to supporting our own needy, contributes extensively each year to medical research, disadvantaged and disability groups, hospices and air ambulances, as well as providing international relief.

Much of this is distributed to local branches of national charities. For example, this week, Parkinson’s Awareness Week, Parkinson's UK has been given a big boost by the award of a major grant of £250,000 from The Grand Charity. £5,000 will be presented to a branch in each Province.

Brethren I have given much thought to setting a target figure for 2020, mindful of the present economic situation and a smaller membership yet aware that we must endeavour to put back into the central charities at least an equivalent of that they distribute here in Somerset. I have therefore concluded that our goal for 2020 should be £2.8m.

At first thought this may seem challenging but brethren the bulk of this can be raised if we take advantage of the Gift Aid scheme. It will require most of us to contribute on average between £5 and £7 per month by Gift Aid this year and keep that going to 2020. Over this period Gift Aid can add over 40% to our donations through income tax rebate and enhanced interest.

Brethren if you will respond positively and promptly to this challenge we can meet our commitment to the central charities and maintain our important support for local good causes, avoiding the need for a formal appeal.

We shall be providing more details later in the year but in the mean time I would urge that we all act now and talk our Lodge Charity Steward about signing a Gift Aid Form as soon as possible. Further information will be sent to Lodge Secretaries and Charity Stewards shortly.

### 3. Caring for one another.

I am pleased to see Lodge Mentors and Almoners actively at work in our Lodges building relationships, keeping in touch and endeavouring to meet

the needs of our members. This is vital work for without it other attempts to retain members and plan for the future will be insufficient.

Brethren, we all recognise that freemasonry involves making a serious commitment and that it can at times put us under pressure, perhaps to perform, to progress or to take on an important role in the lodge. It is in facing up to these challenges and opportunities that we can grow in confidence and stature and find many of the rewards that the masonic journey offers each and every one of us.

We must however keep in mind that this is a voluntary activity, part of our recreation, and so must also provide opportunities for enjoyment, fun and friendship not only for ourselves but family too.

To grow our lodges successfully we must achieve a balance between these two aims. This is not easy, and at times requires tolerance, patience and sensitivity.

I urge you therefore to be mindful of the needs and aspirations of our fellow members and strive to make their freemasonry rewarding, enjoyable and of lasting value.

The Deputy and Assistant PGMs and I look forward to visiting widely over the coming year, meeting as many of you as possible and supporting where we can.

Please feel free to speak to us and remember that our role is first and foremost to support and encourage you.

Lastly I thank everyone who has worked hard in the planning and delivery of today's meeting.

I thank you all for attending today and for helping to make this a memorable and happy day for me.

Please take my good wishes back to your lodges.

Finally, I wish you all a safe and trouble free journey home.