

PROVINCIAL GRAND LODGE

OF MARK MASTER MASONS

OF DURHAM

MINUTES

OF THE SIXTEENTH PROVINCIAL

ANNUAL ASSEMBLY

**of The Ancient and Honourable Fraternity
of Royal Ark Mariners**

**Held at the Masonic Chambers, Ferryhill
on FRIDAY 31st March 2023**

**THE 2023 PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY OF THE ANCIENT AND HONOURABLE
FRATERNITY OF ROYAL ARK MARINERS OF DURHAM .**

The Sixteenth Annual Assembly of the Ancient and Honourable Fraternity of Royal Ark Mariners within the Province of Durham was held on Friday, 31st March 2023, in the Masonic Chambers, 34 North Street, Ferryhill, Co. Durham, at which meeting 99 Brethren were in attendance.

The Provincial Grand Master, R.W. Bro. David Nigel Hanson, presided, assisted by the Deputy Provincial Grand Master W.Bro. Ronald Trevor Lynn R.A.M.G.R., and the Assistant Provincial Grand Master W.Bro. Michael James Wilkinson. (3)

The following holders of Royal Ark Mariner Grand Rank were present:
W. Bros. R. A. Walton P.G.M. (Northumberland), F.A. Rankin, P.D.P.G.M.,
D. Guy P.D.P.G.M., S.A.R. Ingram P.A.P.G.M., A. Gurney Prov.G.Scribe,
M. Davis Prov.G.D.C., F. Piggford, R.S. Hodgson, R.N. Neville, G.J. Mitchinson,
J.M. Nye, L. Danby, R.F. Knight, G. Clark, M.J. Graham, L. Bell, S.J. Watson,
A.J. Clark, A. Cuthbertson, W.S. Malcolm, A. Ruddell, J. Awdas, K.I. Anderson,
R.W. Emerson, J.T. Dodds, K. Pitchford, J.R. Bayles, K. Dobbin, J.A. Easton,
and M. Graham Snr. (30)

The following holders of Provincial Grand Rank were present:
D. Dunn, C. Raine, P.A. Carter, R.R. Tonner, R. Hope, A. Weir, J.S.Denham,
M. Rankin, M.J. Gilpin, J.W. Gray, A. Monkhouse, M. Swailes, J.B.M. Schoolkate,
M. Ross, F.A. Shaftoe, G. Paylor, J. Tyrer, R.J. Hargate, G.W. Alderson, P. O'Doherty,
K. Parker, K.P. Dale, K.U. Robson, N.E. Heaviside, D. Battensby, P. Harrison,
D.J. Anderson, F.W. Lynas, M. Maddison, A. Dargue, T.B. Jack, G. Johnson,
K.L. Robson, I. Atkinson, I. Jewell, R.C. Black, S.D. McGlen, S. Bell, D.J. Crabtree,
and J.A. Palfreyman. (40)

There were twenty six other members of the Order present. (26)

1. Opening the Assembly

The Presiding Officer, R.W. Bro. David Nigel Hanson, declared the Assembly 'Open' at 6-00pm.

2. Obituary and Condolence Prayer.

The Provincial Grand Master invited W.Bro. Rev'd. Phillip Alan Carter, Prov.G.Chap., Prov.R.A.M.G.R., to announce the Obituary and deliver a Prayer to Departed Merit. The Brethren 'stood to order' to remember those Brethren who had passed to the Grand Lodge above since the last Royal Ark Mariner Assembly.

3. Welcome Address.

The Provincial Grand Master welcomed all Brethren to the Annual Assembly. In particular, he welcomed R.W. Bro. Raymond Arthur Walton, P.G.M. for Northumberland, Past Rulers of the Province of Durham, and Heads of other Orders in the Province of Durham.

4. The Minutes of the previous Meeting.

W.Bro. Derek Dunn Prov.G.S.W. proposed, and W.Bro. Roy Norman Neville R.A.M.G.R. seconded, that the Minutes of the Provincial Annual Assembly of the Ancient and Honourable Fraternity of Royal Ark Mariners, held on Friday, 25th March 2022, which had been circulated via Lodge Scribes, and published on the Provincial website, be taken as read, confirmed and adopted.

The proposition was carried.

5. Letters of Apology.

The Provincial Grand Scribe announced receipt of apologies from:

W.Bro. L. Nevin	Eclectic Lodge	No. 39
W.Bro. P. Quinn	Eclectic Lodge	No. 39
W.Bro. E.T. Hall.....	Stockton-on Tees Lodge.....	No. 122
W.Bro. I. H. Morrison	Stockton-on-Tees Lodge.....	No. 122
W. Bro. G. Quinn	Union Lodge	No. 124
W.Bro. K. Liddell.....	Industry Lodge.....	No. 293
W.Bro. G.S. Savage.....	Dunelm Lodge	No. 356
W.Bro. J. Hind.....	Rockcliffe Lodge	No. 362
W. Bro. P. Maughan.....	Rockcliffe Lodge	No. 362
W.Bro. A. Prest	Bede Lodge.....	No. 605
V.W. Bro. J.W. Warren.....	Bede Lodge.....	No. 605
W.Bro. B. Eltringham.....	Bernard Gilpin Lodge	No. 860
W.Bro. G. Bainbridge.....	Bernard Gilpin Lodge	No. 860
W.Bro. L. Woodhouse	Bernard Gilpin Lodge	No. 860
W.Bro. J. Bulmer.....	Spennymoor Lodge	No. 981
W.Bro. A. Craven.....	Elevation Lodge.....	No. 1112
W.Bro. L. Howarth.....	Elevation Lodge.....	No. 1112
W.Bro. Rev'd D.A. Wright	Stanhope Lodge	No. 1551
W.Bro. J. Arthur	Chief of the Builders Lodge	No. 1806
W.Bro. D.T. Youngson	Chief of the Builders Lodge	No. 1806

6. Roll of Provincial Team Officers.

The Provincial Grand Scribe announced that all of the Current Team of Provincial Grand Officers were present, with the exception of W.Bro. Graham Bainbridge Prov.G.Gdn. who had been taken ill.

7. Roll of Royal Ark Mariner Lodges.

The Provincial Grand Scribe announced that all of the 20 Royal Ark Mariner Lodges in the Province were represented at the Meeting, and that satisfactory reports had been received from each of them.

8. Provincial Grand Scribe's Report.

W.Bro. Colin Raine Prov.G.J.W., proposed, and W.Bro. John Maurice Nye R.A.M.G.R. seconded, that the Report of the Provincial Grand Scribe, as circulated, and published on the Provincial website, be taken as read, confirmed, and adopted.

The proposition was carried.

Scribe's Report

The Sixteenth Annual Assembly.

Brethren,

I present my fifth Report for The Ancient and Honourable Fraternity of Royal Ark Mariner within the Province of Durham, while our Provincial Grand Master presides over his first Royal Ark Mariner Annual Assembly.

Lodge Visits

During the past year, the former Provincial Grand Master, and the current Provincial Grand Master have led Deputations to the following Royal Ark Mariner Lodges: Union 124 (125th Anniversary); Industry 293; Hackworth 761; Bernard Gilpin 860; Clavering 896; Spennymoor 981; Monument 1055 (Lodge Closure); Durham Lodge of Installed Commanders 1492 (Installation); Ryton 1714 (Belated 25th Anniversary).

Installations

The Provincial Grand Masters were represented at all the Royal Ark Mariner Installation meetings held since our last Annual Assembly, and the reports of the Representatives attending indicated that the ceremonies continued to be of a high standard. Thanks are extended to all those Brethren who represented the Provincial Grand Master so ably, and for compiling the reports to a very high standard. Grateful thanks also go to the Lodges for the courteous and friendly manner in which the Representatives and the Provincial Assistant Directors of Ceremony were received.

Grand Honours

In December 2022 the following Brethren received Grand Honours in the Ancient and Honourable Fraternity of Royal Ark Mariner from The Pro Grand Master, Most Worshipful Brother John Herbert Prizeman:

W.Bro. John Reginal Bayles	Barnard Castle Lodge No. 778
W.Bro. Ronald Trevor Lynn	Barnard Castle Lodge No. 778
W.Bro. John Thomas Dodds	Spennymoor Lodge No. 981

These Brethren are very well known throughout the Province, and congratulations are extended to them all in the hope that they enjoy good health to continue in their efforts towards the good of the Order.

Membership

Summary of Annual Returns of Lodges Year Ended 31st December 2022

No.	LODGE	Total Members Installation 2021	Ele	J	Res	D	Exc	HM	Total Members Installation 2022
39	Eclectic	14	2	0	2	0	0	0	14
122	Stockton-on-Tees	18	0	0	0	1	0	0	17
124	Union	23	1	0	1	1	0	0	22
250	Darlington	18	0	0	0	0	0	0	18
293	Industry	26	1	2	0	1	0	0	28
356	Dunelm	24	0	0	1	1	0	0	22
362	Rockcliffe	32	0	0	2	0	1	1	28
605	Bede	25	1	0	1	0	0	0	25
761	Hackworth	21	0	0	1	1	0	0	19
778	Barnard Castle	21	2	0	0	0	0	0	23
854	St. Andrews	20	1	1	0	2	0	0	20
860	Bernard Gilpin	17	1	1	0	0	0	0	19
896	Clavering	13	0	0	0	1	0	1	11
925	Moseley	17	0	0	0	0	0	0	17
981	Spennymoor	22	2	0	1	2	0	0	21
1112	Elevation	21	0	0	0	0	0	1	20
1492	Durham Lodge of ICs		0	3	1	1	0	0	29
1551	Stanhope	22	0	2	0	0	0	1	23
1714	Ryton	14	1	0	1	0	0	0	14
1806	Chief of the Builders	54	0	2	5	0	0	0	51
		450	12	11	16	11	1	4	441

The Annual Lodge Returns show an overall decrease in membership of 9. This represents a decrease from last year of exactly 2.00%. The overall trend over the last 5 years is a decrease of 11.98% from 501 members (adjusted for the loss of Castle Eden Lodge and Monument Lodge).

Recruitment of new members is so important if we are to grow our membership base, as well as doing everything possible to try to reduce the number of resignations.

Now that we are meeting again on a regular basis, let's see if this year's small downward trend can be arrested by encouraging more of our Mark Lodge members to join this friendly and colourful degree. We must ensure that every one of our Mark Lodge members is aware of the Royal Ark Mariner Degree as the next step in their Masonic development.

Obituary

Since the last Annual Assembly, the Province has suffered the sad loss of the following members of our Royal Ark Mariner Lodges. We acknowledge the service and dedication that they gave to the order, and our thoughts go to their families.

Leslie Dobson, Eclectic Lodge 39.
Born 21st March 1931 - Died 27th April 2022.

Ian Christopher Mason, Union Lodge 124.
Born 26th August 1951 - Died 28th June 2022.

Peter Smailes, Darlington Lodge 250.
Born 3rd March 1935 - Died 5th September 2022.

John Victor Thompson, Spennymoor Lodge 981.
Born 16th June 1944 - Died 2nd August 2022.

Terence Henry Lewis, Eclectic Lodge 39.
Born 24th October 1918 - Died 20th September 2022.

Keith Dinning, Spennymoor Lodge 981.
Born 13th May 1942 - Died 21st September 2022.

Norman John William Moffitt, Ryton Lodge 1714.
Born 25th November 1953 - 9th November 2022.

Raymond Stephenson, Stockton-on-Tees Lodge 122.
Born 4th April 1942 - Died 17th November 2022.

Raymond Gregory Snaith, Darlington Lodge 250.
Born 7th April 1946 - Died 24th November 2022.

Frederick David Graham-Thomas, Rockcliffe Lodge 362.
Born 2nd October 1962 - Died 28th December 2022.

Anthony David Briggs, Ryton Lodge 1714.
Born 6th April 1933 - Died 30th January 2023.

Samuel James Neil, Ryton Lodge 1714.
Born 21st October 1939 - Died 6th February 2023.

Peter Beedle, Barnard Castle Lodge 778.
Born 21st May 1963 - Died 8th February 2023.

Conclusion

Brethren, 12 months ago, I stood before you knowing that a mere 3 weeks beforehand, I had been diagnosed with stage 3 cancer, and that I was to have a major, hopefully life saving, but inevitably a life changing operation only a week later. Little did I know how much my life was to change over the next few months on a personal level. However, here I am, still around, for which I am most grateful, and I have great pleasure in presenting my Fifth Report for your information and consideration.

As always, Brethren, Province cannot function without the assistance of the Lodge Scribes, and I thank them most sincerely for the dedication they have shown in ensuring that returns are completed accurately and promptly.

My Deputy Provincial Grand Scribe, W.Bro. Graham Wharton, my Assistant Provincial Grand Scribe, W.Bro. Ian Heaviside, and the Provincial Grand Registrar, W.Bro. David Battensby, have all continued to show great commitment and dedication in their respective roles. Their enthusiasm, help, and assistance have been greatly appreciated during the last 12 months in particular which have been, and continue to be, a difficult time for both myself, and my wife especially. Thanks to their help, and that of other members of the Senior Team, Province has continued to function smoothly and efficiently.

Congratulations are due to those Brethren being honoured here today, in this Provincial Assembly. No doubt they will continue to support the new Provincial Grand Master, and will strive to work for the good of the Fraternity in general, and this very happy and vibrant Province in particular.

Allan Gurney,

Provincial Grand Scribe.

9. The following were appointed to Provincial Grand Rank in the Ancient and Honourable Fraternity of Royal Ark Mariner.

Frederick William Lynas.....	Eclectic Lodge.....	No. 39
Thomas Neil Hugill.....	Stockton-on-Tees Lodge.....	No. 122
David John Anderson.....	Bede Lodge.....	No. 605
Thomas Barr Jack.....	Bede Lodge.....	No. 605
Alan Dargue.....	Hackworth Lodge.....	No. 761
David Battensby.....	Moseley Lodge.....	No. 925
Stephen Daniel McGlen.....	Castle Eden Lodge.....	No. 930
Peter Harrison.....	Spennymoor Lodge.....	No. 981
Ivan Jewell.....	Elevation Lodge.....	No. 1112

10. The following were invited to take office in the Provincial Team for 2021-2022.

Norman Eric Heaviside, Chief of the Builders Lodge No. 1806.....	Senior Warden
John Strachan Denham.....	Hackworth Lodge No. 761.....Junior Warden
John Maurice Nye.....	Spennymoor Lodge No, 981..... Dep.G.D.C
Graham Johnson.....	Industry Lodge No. 293.....Sword Bearer
James Arthur Palfreyman.....	Barnard Castle Lodge No. 778.Standard Bearer
Leslie Nevin.....	Eclectic Lodge, No. 39.....Guardian
John Bernard Martin Schoolkate.....	Union Lodge, No. 124.....Warder

11. The assembled Brethren were then treated to an Explanation of the RAM Tracing Board. This was performed by W.Bros. Fred Piggford, Mark Gilpin, and Don McKenzie. W.Bro. D.N. Hanson P.G.M. said that it was wonderful to hear the Explanation, which is too rarely done, gave a Vote of Thanks. The Brethren showed their appreciation in the usual manner.

12. The Provincial Grand Master Addressed the Assembly.

Brethren, to stand here as your Provincial Grand Master is an honour and a humbling experience.

When I look around this Lodge room, I see friends. Friends who work tirelessly for their Lodges, the Province, and for the good of Freemasonry in general. Brethren, each and everyone of you are different, but you have one thing in common, and that is you are all inspirational. What you do as individuals and what we do together makes a huge difference, and in some cases, without being dramatic, helps to change and saves people's lives. You help to remove tears and replace them with smiles.

Take for example the work your Mark Benevolent Fund does on your behalf. It has supported the St. John Ambulance, Blood Bikes, Air Ambulance, the tragedy of the earthquake in Turkey, and the horrendous situation in Ukraine. It has also supported the RNLI life boats, scouts, mountain rescue, and many other national, local and individual worthy causes.

This work can only be carried out with your generosity.

The majority of the money is raised when Provinces are in Festival, and the Province of Durham have been honoured to host the 2029 Mark Benevolent Fund Festival. We had an excellent launch in January and under the Chairmanship of John Watts and his committee, we have had a tremendous start to the Festival. Lodges have been generous with donations and you, Brethren, have been incredibly supportive in buying and wearing the Festival Jewel which was a hundred pounds at the launch, and still is a hundred pounds even though inflation has gone up.

Talking about inflation it will effect all of us, and there could be some difficult times ahead. But please remember, "It is not just about making a donation it is about making a difference", and all of you should be very proud because you are making a difference.

Talk about being proud, I was immensely proud to be in London in December to witness The Deputy Provincial Grand Master Trevor Lynn, John Bayles and John Dodds receive Royal Ark Mariner Grand Rank. Brethren, the honour is richly deserved for the work you have done for the Province and I look forward to the work you are about to do. Brethren, would you please congratulate the recipients of RAM Grand Rank.

My congratulations go to the Brethren who I have appointed to Provincial Grand Rank, and I look forward to working with the Officers of the year. As you have heard the new Senior Warden of the Province say many times: “Continue to enjoy your masonry”. Well, I definitely know we will continue to enjoy our Royal Ark Masonry in the year ahead.

To the out going team, my sincere thanks goes to you for supporting the Province and myself. A Special mention to the Past Senior and Junior Wardens, Dereck and Colin. Thank you for representing me at Installations, and I do hope both of you have had a memorable and enjoyable year.

Brethren weather you are a member in Northumberland, Cornwall or Durham, we all have similar issues and a couple of them are Recruitment and retention.

How do we address recruitment : it is down to each and everyone of us to promote the degree, and to ask Brethren to come and join us. Once we have we done that we must make sure we give the candidate the best possible experience. We do that by giving them a warm welcome, working hard at the ritual and a good festive board. When you look at the successful Lodges in the Province, the ritual is always of the highest order. And I ask you to take this back to your lodges - Work hard at the ritual and make it the best it can possibly be.

Retention : Brethren, I am passionate about keeping in touch with our Brethren. It is not just down to the almoner to keep in touch. It is down to all of us to be almoners. That phone call to a brother who has not been to his lodge will make the world of difference to him. Tell him we miss him, tell him we are thinking about him and tell him we look forward to seeing him back in his Lodge.

Brethren Freemasonry is a wonderful organisation. Why? One reason is because of you.

I know the Assistant Grand Master is going to give a vote of thanks but it would be remiss of me not to thank 2 teams, the first being Mike Davis and his DC team , Gary Quinn, John Nye , Sid Watson, Ken Robson and David Anderson who, as Joanna Lumley said are “Absolutely Fabulous”. And Allan Gurney’s Secretarial team, Graham Wharton, Ian Heaviside and David Battensby. The work Allan and his team get through is colossal and is always of the highest standard. Allan, our prayers and

thoughts are with you and your family, and I hope that things can be the best they possibly can be for you. Remember you have the support of all the Brethren. Brethren thank you for your patience throughout my Address. But most importantly, I thank each and everyone of you for your friendship.

13. The date and venue of the next meeting.

The Provincial Grand Master announced that the next Annual Assembly would be held on Friday, 22nd March 2023, at Ferryhill Masonic Chambers.

14. A collection was then taken for the P.G.L. of Durham M.B.F. which raised the sum of £681-07 including Gift Aid Tax Relief.

15. Any other business.

The Provincial Grand Scribe stated that he had no further business to bring before this Annual Provincial Assembly.

16. Closing.

The Presiding Officer, R.W. Bro. David Nigel Hanson declared the Assembly ‘Closed’ at 6-59pm.

..... David Nigel Hanson, Provincial Grand Master.

..... Allan Gurney, Provincial Grand Scribe

Dated: