

**PROVINCIAL GRAND LODGE**

**OF MARK MASTER MASONS**

**OF DURHAM**

**MINUTES**

**OF THE EIGHTEENTH PROVINCIAL**

**ANNUAL ASSEMBLY**

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

**Held at the Masonic Chambers, Ferryhill  
on FRIDAY 28<sup>th</sup> March 2025**

**THE 2025 PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY OF THE ANCIENT AND HONOURABLE  
FRATERNITY OF ROYAL ARK MARINERS OF DURHAM.**

The Eighteenth Annual Assembly of the Ancient and Honourable Fraternity of Royal Ark Mariner within the Province of Durham was held on Friday, 28<sup>th</sup> March 2025, in the Masonic Chambers, 34 North Street, Ferryhill, Co. Durham, at which meeting 104 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 Prov.R.A.M.G.R. (3)

There were 26 Royal Ark Mariner Grand Rank present along with R.W. Bro. Prof. D.K. Wilson A.G.M (27)

There were 36 holders of Provincial Grand Rank present: (36)

There were 38 other members of the Order present. (38)

**1. Opening the Assembly**

The Provincial Grand Master, 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 Past Rulers of the Province of Durham, and Heads of other Orders in the Province of Durham.

**4. Salutations.**

The Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies, V.W. Bro. Mike Davis, then conducted the Salutations to the following Brethren:

The Provincial Grand Master was greeted with 7

The Deputy Provincial Grand Master was greeted with 5

The Assistant Provincial Grand Master was greeted with 5

The Past Deputy Provincial Grand Master was greeted with 5

**5. The Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies then requested permission to escort the Assistant Grand Master into the Annual Assembly.**

The Assistant Grand Master, R.W. Bro. Prof. Denovan Keith Wilson, Past Provincial Grand Master for the Province of Durham, was then escorted into the Annual Assembly, and saluted with 9.

6. The Minutes of the previous Meeting.

W.Bro. Mark Julian Gilpin Prov.G.S.W. proposed, and W.Bro. John Thomas Dodds RAMGR seconded, that the Minutes of the Provincial Annual Assembly of the Ancient and Honourable Fraternity of Royal Ark Mariners held on Friday, 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2024, which had been circulated via Lodge Scribes, and published on the Provincial website, be taken as read, confirmed and adopted.

The proposition was carried.

7. Letters of Apology.

The Provincial Grand Scribe announced receipt of apologies from:

<b>W.Bro. K.P. Dale .....</b>	<b>Stockton-on-Tees Lodge .....</b>	<b>No. 122</b>
<b>W.Bro. L Danby.....</b>	<b>Stockton-on-Tees Lodge .....</b>	<b>No. 122</b>
<b>W.Bro. A Gurney.....</b>	<b>Bernard Gilpin Lodge .....</b>	<b>No 860</b>
<b>W.Bro. R.S. Hodgson .....</b>	<b>Dunelm Lodge .....</b>	<b>No. 356</b>
<b>W.Bro. RW Rumley .....</b>	<b>Bede Lodge .....</b>	<b>No. 605</b>
<b>W.Bro. K Dobbin.....</b>	<b>Industry Lodge.....</b>	<b>No. 293</b>
<b>W.Bro. J.W. Warren .....</b>	<b>Bede Lodge .....</b>	<b>No. 605</b>
<b>W.Bro. T.E. Bradley.....</b>	<b>Hackworth Lodge .....</b>	<b>No. 761</b>
<b>W.Bro. B. Eltringham .....</b>	<b>Bernard Gilpin Lodge .....</b>	<b>No. 860</b>
<b>W.Bro. Rev'd D.A. Wright .....</b>	<b>Stanhope Lodge .....</b>	<b>No. 1551</b>
<b>W.Bro. J.P. Thompson.....</b>	<b>Chief of the Builders Lodge .....</b>	<b>No. 1806</b>

8. Roll of Provincial Team Officers.

The Provincial Grand Scribe announced that all of the Current Team of Provincial Grand Officers were present.

9. 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.

10. Provincial Grand Scribe's Report.

W.Bro. Alvin Leigh Kiplin 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 2025**

### **The Eighteenth Annual Assembly.**

Brethren,

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

#### **Lodge Visits**

During the past year, the Provincial Grand Master has led Deputations to the following Royal Ark Mariner Lodges:

Eclectic 39; Stockton-on-Tees 122; Industry 293; Dunelm 356; Hackworth 761 (Shared night with Mark Lodge); Moseley 925; Spennymoor 981; and 2 visits to Durham Lodge of Installed Commanders 1492 (Wardens' Night & Installation).

#### **Installations**

The Provincial Grand Master was 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 2024 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. Kenneth Urquhart Robson

Rockcliffe Lodge 362

W. Bro. Robert Ross Tonner

Barnard Castle Lodge 778

These Brethren are very well known throughout the Province, and congratulations are extended to both of them 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 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024

No.	LODGE	Total Members Installation 2023	Ele	J	Res	D	Exc	HM	Total Members Installation 2024
39	Eclectic	16	1	0	1	2	0	0	14
122	Stockton-on-Tees	15	1	0	1	1	0	0	14
124	Union	24	1	0	0	0	0	1	24
250	Darlington	16	0	0	1	1	0	0	14
293	Industry	29	2	0	0	0	0	0	31
356	Dunelm	22	1	1	0	1	0	0	23
362	Rockcliffe	26	1	0	0	0	0	0	27
605	Bede	25	0	0	0	1	0	0	24
761	Hackworth	21	0	0	0	0	0	0	21
778	Barnard Castle	21	3	1	1	2	0	0	22
854	St. Andrews	20	2	0	0	2	0	1	19
860	Bernard Gilpin	19	2	0	1	3	0	0	17
896	Clavering	13	0	1	0	1	0	0	13
925	Moseley	19	0	0	2	0	0	0	17
981	Spennymoor	21	0	0	0	0	0	0	21
1112	Elevation	18	0	0	0	1	0	1	16
1492	Durham Lodge of ICs	28	0	3	3	0	0	0	28
1551	Stanhope	23	1	0	0	0	0	0	24
1714	Ryton	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	11
1806	Chief of the Builders	50	1	1	0	0	0	2	50
		<b>437</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>430</b>

The Annual Lodge Returns show an overall decrease in membership of 7. This represents a decrease from last year of 1.61% - up from 1.31%, so we are just about holding our own. The most promising numbers are that there were 16 Elevations, and only 10 Resignations. Let us hope that this trend continues as we go forward.

As always, 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.

I cannot too strongly repeat what I wrote last year: that for the Royal Ark Mariner Degree to increase its membership, we need to encourage more members of the Craft to join our Mark Lodges – one depends upon the other. Then, we must ensure that every one of our Mark Lodge members is aware of the Royal Ark Mariner Degree as the next step in his 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.

**Ronald Leslie Bean - Bede Lodge 605.**

Born 10<sup>th</sup> December 1938 - Died 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2024.

**Joseph Bulmer - Spennymoor Lodge 981.**

Born 15<sup>th</sup> July 1934 - Died 4<sup>th</sup> July 2025.

**John Reginald Bayles - Barnard Castle Lodge 778.**

Born 11<sup>th</sup> April 1948 - Died 5<sup>th</sup> April 2024.

**William NorwoodC - Clavering Lodge 896.**

Born 26<sup>th</sup> August 1935 - Died 26<sup>th</sup> April 2024.

**Frederick John Francis Rooney – Eclectic Lodge 39.**

Born 29<sup>th</sup> July 1950 - Died 17<sup>th</sup> May 2024.

**David Edwin Vollans - Elevation Lodge 1112.**

Born 13<sup>th</sup> April 1942 - Died 30<sup>th</sup> June 2024.

**Stan Hunter - Hackworth Lodge 761.**

Born 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1949 - Died 18<sup>th</sup> September 2024.

**Jeffrey Awdas – Industry Lodge 293.**

Born 13<sup>th</sup> April 1952 - Died 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2025.

**Harry Frederick Smith - Jarrow Lodge 761**

Born 8<sup>th</sup> April 1951 - Died 27<sup>th</sup> January 2025.

**James Stubbings – Clavering Lodge 896**

Born 12<sup>th</sup> September 1946 – Died 6<sup>th</sup> March 2025.

## Conclusion

Brethren, where have the last 12 months gone? I cannot believe that it is 12 months since I last sat down to write my Annual Report to the Provincial Assembly of Royal Ark Mariner Lodges. I really must be getting older.

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. Stephen Newell, and the Provincial Grand Registrar, W. Bro. David Battensby, as in now usual for them, have all continued to show great commitment and dedication in their respective roles. Their enthusiasm, help, and assistance have been greatly appreciated. Thanks to their help, and that of other members of the Senior Team, Province has continued to function smoothly and efficiently.

As in every Annual Report, congratulations are due to those Brethren being honoured here today, in this Provincial Assembly. No doubt they will continue to support the 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.

Finally, Brethren, I cannot end without say a large ‘Thank you’ to you all for your support, your encouragement, but above all, for your friendship. It is all very much appreciated.

*Allan Gurney*, Provincial Grand Scribe.

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

<b>Eric Leighton</b> .....	<b>Eclectic Lodge</b> .....	<b>No. 039</b>
<b>Martin George Murray</b> .....	<b>Union Lodge</b> .....	<b>No. 124</b>
<b>David Whitfield</b> .....	<b>Darlington Lodge</b> .....	<b>No. 250</b>
<b>Kenneth Meldrum Thompson</b> .....	<b>Industry Lodge</b> .....	<b>No. 293</b>
<b>Philip Nicholas Sephenson</b> .....	<b>Rockcliffe Lodge</b> .....	<b>No. 362</b>
<b>Neil Kevin Garrett</b> .....	<b>Moseley Lodge</b> .....	<b>No. 925</b>
<b>Roderick Alan Hume</b> .....	<b>Chief of the Builders Lodge</b> .....	<b>No. 1806</b>

12. The following were invited to take office in the Provincial Team for 2025-2026.

<b>Paul O’Doherty</b> .....	<b>Rockcliffe Lodge</b> ....	<b>No. 362..Senior Warden</b>
<b>George Paylor</b> .....	<b>Ryton Lodge</b> .....	<b>No. 1714..Junior Warden</b>
<b>John Maurice Nye</b> .....	<b>Spennymoor. Lodge</b> ....	<b>No,981... Dep.G.D.C</b>
<b>John Barnett</b> .....	<b>Spennymoor Lodge</b> ....	<b>No 981 Sword Bearer</b>
<b>Norman Jemison</b> .....	<b>Moseley Lodge</b> ....	<b>No. 925 Standard Bearer</b>
<b>Robert John Hargate</b> .....	<b>Union Lodge</b> .....	<b>No 124 Guardian</b>
<b>Robert John Donmall</b> .....	<b>Ryton Lodge</b> .....	<b>No 1714 Warder</b>

13. The assembled Brethren were then treated to an excellent lecture by **WBro Kenneth U Robson** on initiation ceremonies in the many guilds.

**W.Bro. D.N. Hanson P.G.M. thanked Kenneth and said that it was an entertaining Lecture.**

The Brethren showed their appreciation in the usual manner.

14. **The Provincial Grand Master Addressed the Assembly.**

15. The date and venue of the next meeting.

**The Provincial Grand Master announced that the next Annual Assembly would be held on Friday, 27<sup>th</sup> March 2026, at Ferryhill Masonic Chambers.**

16. A collection was then taken for the Durham2029 Festival, which raised the sum of **£729.19 including Gift Aid Tax Relief.**

17. **Any other business.**

The Provincial Grand Scribe stated that he had no further business to bring before this Annual Provincial Assembly but asked that all laminated sheets of the Ritual and the National Anthem be left on the seats.

At this point, the Assistant Grand Master retired from the Assembly.

18. Closing.

The Presiding Officer, R.W. Bro. David Nigel Hanson then declared the Assembly 'Closed' at 7-29pm.

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

..... **Graham Wharton, Provincial Grand Scribe**

**Dated:** .....