

Companions may I thank you all for your attendance here this evening. It's great to see such a good turn out on our first visit to Newforge Country Club and the room so well filled.

I hope it has met all your requirements and expectations.

I trust that the majority of you had a relaxing summer break and are back, willing and ready to put your shoulder to the Masonic wheel once again for the incoming season.

The installation season will be fast approaching and I would encourage everyone but especially those going into office to attend a class of instruction. We have classes in Banbridge, Galwally House, Belfast and Newtownards and they would appreciate some new members. We all benefit from attending classes, as do our Chapters. Not only do we learn the correct ritual, we also gain in confidence. When we, the Senior Officers are out visiting various Chapters it quickly becomes evident who has attended a class. So, I would encourage all Companions to support the Classes of Instruction for the benefit of us all. Details of when they meet can be found on the District website or by contacting the Class Leaders or Registrars.

We have arranged, Director of Ceremonies seminars, to be held in Newry, Newtownards and Galwally House, Belfast on the 07, 15 and 27 October. Invitations will be issued shortly to all Chapters. So, I would encourage all our Director of Ceremonies and those interested in ritual to attend one or more of these, as I can assure you, they will be very informative and enjoyable. Our 4 Director of

Ceremonies and Representatives of the Supreme Grand Chapter of Instruction will be in attendance, to demonstrate, guide and answer all questions regarding Royal Arch Ritual. So please let as many as possible avail of this opportunity to brush up on our ritual.

I would again remind every Chapter that if you are experiencing difficulties with numbers, administration etc please do not hesitate to contact the Office or your Inspector immediately. We are here to help and assist you to the best of our abilities.

The next Health and Well Being event will be held in Galwally House, Belfast on Tuesday 21 October between 11.00 am and 2.30 pm. Events being held on the day are Health checks, hearing checks, cancer focus, skin scanning, Winter Nutrition and exercise presentations and of course refreshments. Further Winter Nutrition and exercise presentations will be held in Newtownards Masonic Hall on Tuesday 28 October 2025 and in Banbridge Masonic Hall on Wednesday 12 November 2025. Both these events will start at 7.00pm. Catherine Culbert Professional Nutritionist will be the main speaker at these presentations. Please support these events, as it is for the benefit of all, Brethren, Companions, family and friends. Provincial Grand Lodge and District Grand Chapter are working closely together regarding Health and Well being. Both parties see this as a very important initiative in maintaining our duty of care for our members. I would like to thank all those who sit on the Committee, under the Chairmanship of the DAGK, for their hard work and expertise.

I would like to appeal to you all to make a special effort to attend the upcoming Church Service on Sunday the 28th September in Hillsborough Presbyterian Church at 3.00 pm to celebrate the Bi-Centenary of Maze ML 356. It is of the utmost importance to have a strong representation at all Church Services, not only to support the unit holding it, but also to show the greater public that we are part of the community, not apart from it. So put it in your diary and I'll see you there.

On the 19 September 2025 the Companions of South Down are holding what has now become an Annual event, a Charity Golf Competition in Kilkeel Golf Club at 1.00 pm. So, all you budding golfers turn up and enjoy the golf, friendship and more importantly help raise some funds for charity. Which this year will be Cancer Research.

I am pleased to announce that the new Regional Inspection Committees are now up and running. I personally would like to thank the team in District for their work in getting this project off the ground. Their dedication and commitment have been exceptional. The personnel of the Inspection Committees for their willingness and acceptance of the improvements. And last, but not least, to you the Companions who will see the benefits of the new committees. May I remind all the Chapters, when appointing a Representative to your Inspection Committee please make them aware that they are the gatekeepers to our Order and their attendance and due diligence must be of the highest standard. Gone are the days when we just turn up and say "Aye ". None of

us get 80% plus attendance at our convocations, so we need to look more carefully at the suitability of our candidates. Remember, **Quality not Quantity**.

Correspondence has been issued to all Registrars on Friday and District Registrars will in due course receive notification outlining the new procedures and payments. The relevant By-Laws are currently being amended and each Chapter will receive a hard copy very shortly. They are also being updated on the District Website. The three new Committees have all got their own designated email address, and all relevant information will be easily accessible to each Registrar of the Committee. A What's App group has also been set up for the Committees so they can speedily correspond with each other, which has never been available before. So once again, thank you to all who participated in achieving what I truly believe will be a much more efficient way of working.

VEC Rev Colin Campbell has tendered his resignation as a District Grand Chaplain (which I have accepted). Colin had been the Moderator of the Non Subscribing Presbyterian Church in Ireland and due to his heavy workload he was unable to fulfil his duties to his own satisfaction. Even though he is now retired, he is still currently looking after two churches. We wish him well for the future.

To this post, I have invited Ex Comp Michael Cochrane, PK of RAC 124 to fulfil this role. I am glad to say that Michael has accepted this invitation and he will be installed at our next Convocation in December, at Bannside Presbyterian Church.

VEC George Finnegan has also tendered his resignation from District Grand Almoner due to other commitments.

Again, I have accepted his resignation and we too wish him well for the future. An appointment will be made at our next Convocation.

At the last Supreme Grand King's Council meeting the ME&SG King requested that all District Grand Chapter Standards be paraded in before each Supreme Grand Chapter meeting. This will take effect from November this year. Also, every District has received the names of those interested in joining RA Masonry which have been communicated from the "Next Step in Freemasonry" campaign. Details will be supplied in the near future, to those Chapters closest at hand to the Brethren concerned.

Foreign Grand Chapter vacancies have arose in Virginia and Wisconsin, due to the retirement of MEC Arnold Imrie and MEC Frank Craig. Who I thank for their time and devotion.

The names of VEC Leonard McCavery PK of Seaforde RAC 1009 was submitted for consideration for Virginia, and VEC Brian Gardner PK of Cottown RAC 430 was submitted for consideration for Wisconsin. Both were approved at the last Supreme Grand Chapter convocation and will be invested at their next Convocation later this month in Antrim.

We all have a busy few months ahead of us. So let us all support each other in whatever way we deem necessary or possible.

As usual I'll leave you with a quote:

“Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts.” Sir Winston Churchill

Companions, I thank you for your attendance and attention and when you leave here this evening, I wish you all a safe journey home.