

Right Eminent Knight, Very Eminent Knights, Distinguished Visitors and Brother Knights of Essex

It is two years since we last gathered here for our Annual Malta Meeting as twelve months ago it was decided that as we should focus the occasion on our Annual Temple Meeting which we were unable to have in May 2021 due to the aftermath of not only Covid but other restrictions. As those restrictions had further resulted in the admission of new candidates to our Order it was I believed pointless, after consulting with the Sub-Prior, to hold such a meeting and thus more beneficial to hold a Chapter of Provincial Priory Meeting when I could finally greet, install and invest those Provincial appointees who had been offered and accepted active ranks as well as first appointments or promotion within Essex.

Once again meeting in a "face-to-face" environment as a Province, after such a long time, I believed was and furthermore became an enjoyable experience in our journey from what had been some difficult times throughout the previous twenty months or so to what is gradually becoming a return to something closer a degree of the previous normality we experienced pre-2020.

Finally, it was in May, earlier this year, we held our normal Temple Priory Chapter Meeting to regularise once again the sequence of Provincial Meetings to the normal format that preceded the arrival of the Pandemic. Then we as a Province were honoured with the presence of the Most Eminent and Supreme Grand Master. The culmination of the various events, activities and projects to mark our **Ninetieth Anniversary Celebrations in 2021** meant we were able to present him with a donation of £3,500 to mark our further commitment to the **Eye Hospital at Jerusalem**. Also at that meeting various items were seen for the first time as a new Altar Cloth - specially made to celebrate the 90th Anniversary - and which covered the Altar framework itself as well as a Cross, Candle Sticks, and Vases, together with a Crucifix for the Sepulchre were unveiled. That commitment to the Eye Hospital has also been shown by those who supported the Grand Master's **Swift Pin Appeal** and Essex donated some £2380 by the time it finished a few months ago. Those who donated should continue to wear their Swift Lapel pin with pride.

In October 2019 at our then Malta Meeting we had invested a then record

number of sixteen candidates taking their next step in their own personal development as a Knight Templar Mason. Today we have exceeded that number with eighteen candidates - at one time two weeks ago there was going to be even more - but unfortunately due to illness or other circumstances the final total was curtailed. To those candidates who took their Malta Degree today I say many, many congratulations; you have all taken another step on your Masonic journey through life. To me as your Provincial Prior it is gratifying to reflect that for many if not most of you have waited - because of the Pandemic restrictions - often eighteen months to join us as a Knight Templar but your desire and your commitment to fulfil that wish says so much about what you believe is the attraction of becoming a member. It is now our duty and mission, as fellow Knights, to ensure that your enthusiasm is nurtured not only to the benefit of all within the Order, but most importantly to your own future enjoyment of KT Masonry in Essex.

Our **Church Service** in September was a great success once again. Over 120 were in the congregation at St. Peter in the Field Church at Bocking whilst 90 or so attended the afternoon buffet Tea at the nearby Howard Hall Centre. A donation of £500 was presented to the Rev. Richard Chand for the Church itself and £100 to the Choir who will use that to help in the purchase of new cassocks and surplices. It is important that we support such organisations in these difficult times and I urge any of you who know of worthwhile causes to contact the Provincial Vice-Chancellor and present a case so that other charitable donations might be spread around the County of Essex in the future.

The attendances at the **Preceptory of Improvement**, since the beginning of the year, have gradually been returning to pre-Covid levels and just a couple of weeks ago 37 knights attended the Sunday morning meeting - the highest number in 2022 so far.

Our **"Provincial Support Team"** initiative is now under the direction of E.Kt. Dave Chapman who has taken over from John Stannard who originally headed the Team. I would like to thank John for all he did in that respect. I hope that Registrars and Marshals as well as Eminent Preceptors of each of the Preceptories will contact the Team if they require assistance when undertaking ceremonies especially so when new candidates are being installed as it is vital

that candidates receive the best welcome they can get when coming into our Province and if that requires assistance in any shape or form members of the Team are only too happy to help.

The "**Provincial Website**" continues to be a much used conduit for communicating current news as well as items of interest with accompanying photographs. If any Preceptory has a story about new candidates or the Installation of their latest Eminent Preceptor there is thus an opportunity to tell a wider audience within the Province about such events. It is also a good "shop window" as an introduction to the KT Degree for those Freemasons, not yet in the Order, seeking further information and knowledge.

Brother Knights, 2022 has seen a return to inter Provincial visits around the country by members of the Essex Executive as we once again meet with our fellow knights in Provinces around England. It is pleasing to see that on a number of occasions we have been joined by other Essex knights, - from the Bodyguard amongst others - who have travelled with myself far and wide. One who does so much in that respect is our former Sub-Prior V.E.Kt. Peter Swannell, who accompanied by his wife Sue, has travelled far and wide this year. Both before and since I became Prior, over many years, Peter has been a superb ambassador for Essex KT wherever he has gone. Only last month Peter and Sue joined me and others at Wells Cathedral for the Great Priory Church Service and then two days later when we saw the new Prior for Somerset installed. Just two of the occasions where we have met recently.

My Sub-Prior Roger and our Vice-Chancellor Chris Smith have worked tirelessly to ensure that we remain a vibrant and stable organisation. Whilst Tony Masella and Mark Harrison have settled into their respective roles as our Provincial Marshal and Deputy Marshal. Other members of the Executive have all continued to play their part in ensuring that the future looks bright for KT Masonry in Essex.

Many of you may have seen on your arrival that in the reception area there is a display of items linked to the **90th Anniversary of the Province** which I spoke about earlier. Amongst the items on sale are the 90th Anniversary History Book which costs £13 for the soft cover edition, champagne flute glasses engraved with the special 90th Anniversary Provincial Crest, and the

glass coasters which also celebrate the anniversary. After the meeting and prior to being called to lunch these will still be available for purchase.

Lastly, I thank you all for your kind attention and take this opportunity to wish you all the compliments of the forthcoming Christmas festive season. As members of this Christian Order let us not forget the hour of 5 o'clock on Christmas Day when we should find a few minutes to be on our own and say that special prayer in which we remember our fellow knights not only in our own Preceptories, but also around the Province in general, as well as throughout the world.

Finally, may God bless you all, and especially each and every individual member of your own families. May you all have a Merry Christmas and a Happy, but as importantly, a Healthy and Peaceful New Year during 2023, when hopefully we can meet together in peace, love and harmony in the enjoyable atmosphere of our own Preceptories.

AJH

28th October 2022.