



Kent Masonic Museum & Library Trust

2019 Annual General Meeting

Chairman's Report

First and foremost I would like to express my genuine, heartfelt gratitude to everyone involved in the work and promotion of the Trust; the wonderful, amazing Stewards who look after our visitors so brilliantly and earn us so many great reviews on Trip Advisor, the Lodge Representatives – or Ambassadors as we now like to call them – who continuously promote our important work to the membership, the key people and managers who organise everything so superbly, including: our Curator and Assistant Curator – David Birch and Mike Farrell; Phil Zygmant our Operations Manager who took over earlier in the year from Jim Flower; Peter West our Compliance Officer; and Charles Pottle, Phil Moore and Steve Fletcher the Chairman, Deputy Chairman and Secretary of our essential Association of Patrons, without the financial support of which we would cease to function. We were sad to see Graham Cuthbert step down as Building and Facilities Manager but are absolutely delighted that he remains in the background to assist and support our CEO in many ways. Thank you, Graham.

The overall team needed to maintain and continuously improve our value, our work and our operation, is large, consisting of more than eighty people. If you add the Lodge Ambassadors to that, there are well in excess of 200. That's a big family for sure, and I'm grateful that I don't need to buy them all a Christmas present! I want each and every one of that extended family to know that your contribution is greatly valued and that without your zeal and attachment, the important and ever-growing reach and benefit of this Trust would simply not work. It is an enormous privilege to be the Chairman of the Trust and I am ever mindful of the value that you all bring to our work and to our family. It is difficult to express that gratitude sufficiently, so I hope that a simple but very sincere "Thank you all" will suffice.

I would like to take this opportunity to also extend those deep and heartfelt thanks, of course, to our Trustees, very importantly including David Tyler our Chief

Executive Officer, John Andrews our Secretary, former Chairman and Life Vice President Charles Boxer who has overarching responsibility for our collections, and Robin Evans who does such a wonderful job as our Head of Marketing and Outreach including Trustee responsibility for the Association of Patrons.

Today we will be losing Roger O'Brien, Ian Ward, and Jim Flower as Trustees and I would not like this moment to pass without us acknowledging the immense amount of work and input they have given to the organisation over a very long period. Their enthusiasm has always been infectious and their skills and knowledge in the important areas of their respective responsibilities have been selflessly donated by them to the operation, for a long time. Thank you, Roger, Ian and Jim, from us all. Roger and Jim remain as keyholders and quietly continue to support and assist the Trust, for which we are most grateful. Thank you, Jim. Thank you, Roger.

Ian Ward has been our Treasurer for some time and he has now been succeeded by Charles Byford. It is Charles' first set of annual accounts that we will be voting to accept as the next item on our agenda today, so please take that opportunity to demonstrate your support and thanks for all his hard work in getting to grips with our finances. We are also looking forward to Charles becoming a Trustee later in the meeting.

With the continued tremendous support and encouragement of Trustee RWBro Mark Estaugh, we continue to take very positive steps towards a far more pro-active and effective connection with the Lodges and Brethren of West Kent, where Mark is, of course, the Provincial Grand Master. Phil Moore, as Deputy Chairman of the Association of Patrons continues to work very closely with Charles Pottle and the AOP team in his endeavours to reinforce that relationship between the two Provinces and cement it permanently for the benefit of the Trust throughout future generations.

Speaking of RWBro Mark Estaugh: I am delighted to announce that the decision has been made to appoint him, *de-facto*, the Deputy President of the Trust. With the Provincial Grand Master of East Kent as *de-facto* President, and the Provincial Grand Master of West Kent as *de-facto* Deputy President, the solid ties between the Provinces will be further strengthened, and an ongoing powerful message of joint support will be clear for all to see, which will add strength and benefit to the future of the Trust, from generation to generation.

I spoke last year of the absolute importance of us, as a CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation) and a responsible Trust with a strong public connection and alignment to Freemasonry, to change our mindset and come to terms with modern organisational practices, including some of those legally essential things these days such as regulatory compliance, health & safety for the visiting public, passers-by, and our own team members, the dreaded GDPR data regulations, and so on *ad infinitum*. We are deeply grateful to David Tyler, our CEO, for the immense amount

of work carried out throughout the year to get that all underway. Thank you, David. I know, more than most, just how challenging and time consuming that has been. And it is no-where near completed yet, although fantastic progress has been made. For example, under you, Peter West is getting our procedures and operations properly documented and ensuring that the whole team is fully aware of what is necessary, day-to-day, for us to ensure compliance with all those regulations, including GDPR and the health & safety requirements of running an operation which invites the general public into our premises. I am particularly pleased that a great deal of training has been carried out for first aid, and that fire safety procedures and systems and so on are now properly in place. And there is more; so much more. Thank you, David, for showing us the way with these essential and demanding changes to our relaxed and traditional operations, which are no longer acceptable in the eyes of the law and regulators, and for making it all happen.

With regard to the building itself, there is some disruptive maintenance work that needs to be carried out over the coming months. It's going to be disruptive because it will include some work on the roof lights, the largest of which is immediately above the main museum gallery. We are currently exploring our options on how best to operate whilst those works are being carried out, but I should give you a heads-up that one possibility is that we'll need to close down for a couple of months so that the displays and collections can be moved away from the working areas. We'll keep you up-to-date as the best way of getting the essential works done is investigated and a decision made on the best way to make it all happen.

Once all the work is completed and we're fully operational again, there will be a series of special displays set-up to attract and encourage even more visitors. An example of what I mean by special displays was the Widow's Sons Masonic motorcycling group who held a public-facing event here fairly recently, which attracted several hundred visitors through our doors on a single day. Watch this space!

We're also working closely with the management team here in the Canterbury Masonic Centre, to amicably but effectively resolve the various misunderstandings regarding access and car parking. The end-result will be a combination of new access systems for pedestrians and clear and supported guidelines for car park usage. Again: watch this space!

In November last year our Curator, David Birch, organised a very successful and moving Remembrance Day event here at the Centre, which is being repeated this year on Sunday 10th November. Details will come out soon, I am sure, but please do support this very poignant event. I'll look forward to seeing you there.

We need a bit of help, please, if you can. First, we have an enormous challenge ahead, which is the data entry necessary to properly catalogue our entire collection. If you know of anyone, or are yourself available, we need a good number of

volunteers to help us with a day or two a week for a year, to help us resolve this big data entry challenge. The other thing is that we are in need of a Head of Library to get our amazing collection of books and printed matter fully available for the use of masonic and family history researchers. We'd love to see the library being utilised more and we need someone to head-up that side of things and make it happen. So, data entry or head of library – if you or anyone you know might be interested, Mason or not, male, female, or gender neutral, please talk as soon as you can to David Tyler, our CEO.

In conclusion I would say that the past year has been one of continued review and reorganisation, of assessing need where compliance and due diligence are needed, including a building maintenance programme, of initiating an exciting programme of marketing, promotion, outreach and the renewed attraction of Patronage, and of the whole Museum & Library team continuing the excellent work for which it has rightly become known. Visitor numbers, as we will surely hear a little later, continue to rise and our consistent positioning as a go-to attraction in Canterbury is simply amazing. I look forward to a further exciting year ahead, with even more improvements all round, including a reinvigorated library.

Finally, I would like to thank our Secretary, John Andrews, for organising today's AGM and lunch for us all, and once again take the opportunity to praise and thank everyone involved for helping to ensure the successful future and status of this unique and important resource that is currently in our care.

Thank you all.

W. Bro. Roger Waltham