

As the year draws to a close, each of us will reflect on 2017 for different reasons. Some of us will be remembering friends and loved ones we have lost while others will recall the birth of a child, the marriage of a son or daughter or some other happy occasion.

Masonically speaking, 2017 will undoubtedly be remembered most of all for the tercentenary celebrations of the United Grand Lodge of England which culminated in an outstanding celebration at the Royal Albert Hall in October when over 4,500 guests witnessed an outstanding depiction of the development of English freemasonry over the last 300 years. On your behalf, I send my very best wishes to our colleagues in the Craft and pledge our continuing support of their efforts to spread the good news about freemasonry

For me, one of the highlights of the year was undoubtedly being invested as Grand Secretary at the Annual Investiture meeting of Grand Mark Lodge in June. I feel very humbled and greatly honoured to have been afforded the opportunity to lead the team at Mark Masons' Hall and I pledge myself to do my utmost to further the interests of our nine Orders whenever possible. I am very fortunate to have the support of a wonderful team and I thank them all for their efforts. There has been much change at head office in the last twelve months – we've recruited several new members to the team; we've started the journey to change the way we do things and deliver a more efficient service for our members; and we've invested heavily in improving the fabric of Mark Masons' Hall. And all this against a background of increasing assets and a strong balance sheet. All our Orders are showing a net increase in members and whilst that should give all of us grounds for optimism we shouldn't be complacent – we still have much to do to ensure we recruit new members and retain existing ones and you'll see much more happening in this area next year.

I am constantly amazed by the generosity of our members in support of our various Benevolent Funds and nowhere was this exemplified more than in May when we held the Royal Parks Charity Walk in support of the Mark Benevolent Fund. Over 300 Brethren, their wives, friends and families participated in this sponsored event which raised more than four times the target sum – achieving a massive £437,934. This event demonstrated the true impact of our collective efforts which will enable the Fund to provide further vehicles for Blood Bike charities up and down the country – watch this space for details of the vehicle distribution early in the New Year.

I feel confident that we are well placed to face the challenges of 2018 and with your support I am sure we will have another successful year.

Whatever you're doing over the coming festive season and wherever you may be, I send you my warmest fraternal good wishes for a happy and peaceful Christmas and a healthy and prosperous New Year.

With fraternal regards and best wishes.

R.W.Bro. Ryan A. Williams, P.G.J.W.
Grand Secretary