

It is the long established custom in Internet (Craft) Lodge No 9659, that the newly installed Worshipful Master addresses the members and visitors in open lodge. I had already prepared this address when I learnt that the address of the Master was not included on the agenda. I consequently 'topped and tailed' the address and presented it as my response to the toast to my health at the Festive Board and the proposition of the toast to the good health of the IPM.

Worshipful Master's Address to the Brethren November 4th 2017

Brethren ,

First of all I must thank the key players who have given much time to this lodge over the year and a half since its consecration in June 2016 and during the period prior to the consecration. Not least among these has been our IPM WB Roy Morris. During the past few weeks, I have received a lot of useful knowledge in the form of emails from both WB Clayton Roberts and Roy Morris which tended to start with the words "In Monmouthshire we do such and such" The latest of these arrived on Wednesday! If I have done or am about to do anything that is not "Monmouthshire Style" I apologise!

A lodge like ours is different! We are different kind of lodge. In most lodges (Craft or Mark), the brethren are familiar with their new Master. He has been initiated or advanced in their presence; progressed through the offices; attended LOI and generally become well known to his fellows. Looking around the room, I guess I am well known to less than ten here today. And so I feel that it is worthwhile telling you a little bit about myself.

I am a retired University Lecturer (26 years) and previous to that I was a Systems Analyst/Designer/Programmer working on real time systems for banks in the UK, USA and Qatar (22 years).

I live in a small village just outside St Albans, Hertfordshire with my wife who is also a retired University Lecturer and have one daughter who is a Senior Lecturer at a prestigious London University College. I have one tenuous connection with Wales – My late mother in law was born and raised in Blackwood. Her father was a Jewish immigrant from Poland who had a small general store here at the turn of the century and until the end of the Second World War. Unfortunately, I do not know the address.

I spend between a quarter and a third of my time in Portugal. I have a house about 16 miles from central Lisbon and am a member of a UGLE Craft Lodge and Chapter there. I have just come out of the First Principal's chair there. I was a founder and am a Past Master of Craft Internet Lodge 9659 and hope that some of the lessons learnt there can be reused here.

I am a member of several orders in Freemasonry and have been in the chair of all except one, which shall be addressed (God Willing) in 2019. So far as Mark Masonry is concerned, this is the fourth Lodge of which, I have had the honour to be Master. It is a wonderful feeling. It does not diminish with repetition. In fact it is enhanced. I am still somewhat bemused and gobsmacked as to why I was selected as SW and therefore to progress to Master in a year and can only reiterate what I wrote and said then. That it is a great honour and I thank the Brethren and the Province.

A Lodge like ours is different. In most Mark Lodges the Registrar of Marks is a fairly cushy number. Three maybe Four meetings a year. Lucky to have half a dozen advances to prepare Marks for.

I was very concerned regarding George Young's task of having to produce 80 Marks for the meeting in Bucharest at the end of November. I suggested that I might appoint a Steward specifically to act as 'Assistant R O M'. George said it was all OK and as long as he had the details in good time, there would be no problem. Still worried, I wrote saying that if he could not keep up with the numbers to let me know so that I could appoint his Assistant. Yesterday morning, George wrote to me confirming that SEVENTY out of the 79 marks required had been prepared. George a big thank you! Brethren of the Lodge and the Province please recognise this achievement.

A lodge like ours is different! We have our home in this Province but our membership is already diverse and will become more so as the lodge matures. Of the 37 Founders, 22 were Mark Masons in this Province, a further four were from nearby South Wales. I was very aware of this when I appointed my Stewards. Two are based in USA, One in South America (Brazil), Two in Romania, One in England and One in in the Province. The overseas Stewards will, I hope, further spread of this lodge in their home countries and will be able to assist the Assistant Secretary in verifying qualifications to membership. The USA has proved a fruitful source of members for the Craft Internet Lodge and for some reason Brazil likewise provides a plentiful flow of new members. I hope that we can do the same in the Mark.

We have already established a major foothold in Romania with more than sixty brethren advanced in July and a further seventy nine to be advanced in three weeks' time. We have the Grand Master of Romania in our numbers along with several of his Grand Officers. It is his stated objective to have every Craft Mason in Romania to be a Mark Mason. On that journey, he expects that sufficient Mark Lodges will be consecrated to be able to form a Mark Overseas District and no doubt many of us here today will be assisting in the consecration of those lodges.

A Lodge like ours is different! Our geographic diversity means we cannot meet for regular or ad hoc LOIs and committee meetings. In any Lodge there are four fora of communication – The Lodge Administrative Officers – The Brethren – and the Provincial Executive (often but not exclusively in the form of the Provincial Secretary and Provincial DC) and the outside world. We have made a great start to achieving the necessary communication levels but it is clear to me and many others that we have some way to go. Tim Huckle has set up the structures and started the population of these structures. The next step is to get the web site to the content and usability standards that will facilitate appropriate and communication between all interested parties. As an example last month Cristian (in Bucharest) and I were trying to join a group discussion that was going on in parallel between about half dozen members of the lodge. He and I had a great chat with each other with good visual and audio communications. We could see the other group but could not join. It was all to do with the differences between implementations of Facebook Messenger Facebook Videochat and stand-alone Messenger. We have a number of media available to us Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Skype, Whatsapp Google +, etc etc etc. The Craft Internet Lodge No 9659 experimented with second life soon after its launch in the early 2000s. But most of the members found it difficult to use effectively and quickly went back to using old fashioned email. I believe that a small group still use it. The favourite medium differs in different parts of the world and among different communities and age groups. For me a managed email system although perhaps clunky provides a common platform that is reliable

and automatically generates an archive. We will move forward on this and will have a small committee tasked to look at this specifically.

This Lodge is different! We try to meet three times a year once in Monmouthshire for Installation; Once in the Master's home province and once overseas . In my year I had hoped to have a meeting in Portugal. This has proved so difficult for various reasons that I have abandoned the idea. At about the time that I was coming to this decision, I learned of the meeting in Bucharest and feeling that two overseas meetings was an unreasonable burden on the membership have not progressed my alternative which was Malta. My second meeting will be either in Harrow about 10 miles from central London or in Mark Masons Hall in Central London. Of which all brethren will receive due notice.

Finally I must bring your attention to our IPM and Installing Master WB Roy Morris. I think no one will disagree that without Roy, this Lodge would never have come into being and I am truly grateful for all the work that he has put in to bring his dream to fruition. It was Roy who offered me the chance to be SW and subsequently WM and for that I thank him most sincerely. I also take the opportunity of congratulating him on his elevation to Grand Rank which I think we all agree is well deserved and a fitting reward. I was pleased with the way the manner in which he conducted the first part of the meeting and of course the inner working. Roy was master of I L 9659 2014 – 2015 and I imagine got a liking at that time for this style of Lodge. His year was a great success and he went on to manage the various social events of the Lodge. I trust he will continue in like manner for this Lodge. Roy is someone who gets things done. Sometimes quietly, sometimes not so quietly but always effectively and with consideration for those around him. I cannot ask for a better mentor and guide than Roy.