



Provincial Grand Lodge of The Scottish Borders

Installation of Bro. James Thom as Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master and his Commissioned Office-bearers

16 August 2025

**Toast to the Provincial Grand Lodge of the Scottish Borders
By Bro. Stuart J. Robertson- Provincial Grand Master of East Lothian**

Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master

Right Worshipful Depute Grand Master

Distinguished Brethren

Brethren all

On the 1st of February 2018, the Grand Lodge of Scotland at its Regular Communication approved a significant realignment within our Constitution—affecting two historic Provinces: The Provincial Grand Lodge of East Lothian & Berwickshire, and the Provincial Grand Lodge of Roxburgh, Peebles and Selkirk Shires.

From the 31st of March that year, a new chapter in Scottish Freemasonry began. The Provincial Grand Lodge of East Lothian & Berwickshire became the Provincial Grand Lodge of East Lothian, and the Provincial Grand Lodge of Roxburgh, Peebles and Selkirk Shires were renamed the Provincial Grand Lodge of the Scottish Borders.

This change brought a fresh dynamic to both Provinces. East Lothian streamlined its Lodges within the county boundary, while the Lodges of Berwickshire joined their brethren in the Borders. And so, Brethren, with this shared history and enduring connection, I stand before you today as Provincial Grand Master of East Lothian, honoured to propose this toast to our friends in the Provincial Grand Lodge of the Scottish Borders.

What a joy it is to be here in Kelso—a jewel of the Borders, nestled at the confluence of the Rivers Tweed and Teviot. A town rich in heritage, and today, rich in fellowship.

And we are, indeed, in good company. For while we are in this Province, we are in the safe hands of the Reivers! So much so, that the Provincial crest proudly features one on horseback for all to see.

But who were the Reivers? A quick online search reveals:

“The Reivers were Scottish and English families who lived along the Border and were renowned for their horsemanship, combat skills, and fierce independence. Their actions gave rise to terms like *‘blackmail’* and *‘red-handed’*. Known for feuds, fortified dwellings, and frequent raids, they primarily targeted livestock but would steal anything of value. Reivers often engaged in kidnapping, leaving a legacy of both fear across the region.”

Brethren, please see this from an East Lothian perspective – this bunch weren’t content with blackmailing us, plundering our homes and stealing our women, oh no, they had to go one step further, they stole our Lodges!

Yes, Brethren, we are most certainly in safe hands today!

Yet, among their many traits, one stands out—kinship. And how fitting that is, as we gather here as Masonic brothers to celebrate the Installation of a new Provincial Grand Master.

Today, we welcome the 30th Provincial Grand Master of a Province whose journey began in 1747. A Province that, in 2025, proudly comprises 16 daughter Lodges, from St Ebbe No. 70 up in Eyemouth, to Peebles Kilwinning No. 24 in the west, and down to Hawick No. 111 and St James No. 424 in the South.

This is a Province whose Lodges work tirelessly within their communities—supporting youth groups, hospital charities, local initiatives, and countless lads and lassies of its Common Ridings.

A Province that nurtures its young and new Masons through its Quarrymen Group, with one recent member even assisting the Young Ashlars in performing a degree at Freemasons' Hall.

It is a social Province, hosting dances, balls, golf outings, bowls days, and even an annual pub quiz, with the promise of *decent-ish* prizes!

And now, it is led by your newly Installed Provincial Grand Master, Brother James Thom, Past Master of Lodge Melrose St John No. 1bis. He is supported by a dedicated Commission: Brothers Stewart, Dale, David, Mick, and Brian, working together to continue the Province's proud journey.

Sir Walter Scott, who loved and lived in this region, once said:

"A sound head, an honest heart, and a humble spirit are the three best guides through time to eternity."
I am confident that Brother Thom and his team will guide the Province in that very spirit.

And for the members of the Daughter Lodges, a guide from the year 1914, when your Provincial Grand Bard, Brother William Anderson penned the following words in his ode:

*"Ye Daughters of the Province, truly wed,
By Gala, Ettrick, Teviot, Tweed and Jed,
Your filial bonds let not discord assail,
But peace and perfect fellowship prevail"*

RWPGM, many of us know you work in commercial operations and field sales with Europacific soft drinks. Just as you care for your customers, we know you will care for your brethren. And if ever the road gets bumpy, remember the slogan:

"At the end of the day, there's always a Schweppes."

So, from all of us here today, we hope that you, your Commission, and all the brethren of the Scottish Borders do the one thing written on every Coca-Cola bottle around the world—Enjoy!

Brethren, whether it's a Coke in your glass or something a little stronger, please charge your glasses, be upstanding, and join me in a toast to our friends:

**THE PROVINCIAL GRAND LODGE OF THE SCOTTISH BORDERS,
COUPLED WITH THE NAME OF ITS LATEST PGM – BROTHER JAMES THOM.**

Toast to The Grand Lodge Scotland
By Bro. J. Stewart Clark – Depute Provincial Grand Master

RWPGM ,RWDGMM, Distinguished Brethren , Brethren all ,It is an honour and privilege to propose the toast to The Grand Lodge of Scotland, and I would like to thank our – NEW - PGM, Brother James Thom for giving me this honour and opportunity.

A wise man, Grand Bard Bro. George Donnelly once told me LESS IS MORE. So, taking his advice I will proceed accordingly – in addition Bro. George Donnelly always has me on the ‘ CLOCK ‘.

The Installation of The Provincial Master is every 5 years, which is a considerable timescale, so when they do come around it is a very special occasion for each Province.

I would like to congratulate our Depute Grand Master, Brother Alexander Moncrieff and his Grand Lodge Office-bearers for an excellent Installation, and I’m sure you would agree, today was the same high standard we have come to expect.

Every 3 years, The International Scottish Masonic Conference takes place. This year it was hosted by Zambia with the theme of; Enlightened Horizons - Charting the Future of Freemasonry.

As a Proxy Master of a Lodge in Zambia, the step was taken to attend. I accompanied IPPGM Bro. Andrew Elliot Forsyth, who delivered a paper on ‘ Young Masons Initiative ‘ – very informative and well received.

How heartened I was when my Proxy Lodge, Unity 1510 RWM Bro. Aman Mohan unveiled a plaque to commemorate the building of a classroom for secondary education. Brethren, a case where we as Freemasons worldwide are supporting our local communities.

Moving on from our community involvement to our considerable Charity work. Our association with Prostate Scotland as our main charity over 10 years, culmination in the GMM rallying cry of “let’s make it a million”. Brethren, there were doubters, BUT WE did it and some!

The current total stands at a staggering £1.3M, well Brethren you were all part of this magnificent achievement and that is something we as Freemasons should be very proud of !!

We continue our legacy with The Prostate Champion initiative to raise awareness of Prostate Cancer, led by Grand Almoner Bro. Tom Davidson. I am proud to be the Prostate Champion for The Scottish Borders Province, part of the 68 Prostate Champions covering our 32 Provinces. From the talks, presentations and feedback I have had that we are making men and women aware and are saving lives!

This initiative is not a short-term sprint Brethren, but a long-term marathon in the hope that soon we can get a screening programme in place as we have with Breast and Bowel screening programmes . The good work goes on !!

Moving on Brethren , the Grand Lodge Governance and Strategy Board, who meet on a regular basis, aim to expand the global presence of Scottish Freemasonry by placing membership to the fore and growing internationally and to create and stimulate global communication and interaction.

Brethren, we as Freemasons currently do not seek the limelight or credit for the charitable work we do, however, this will change in the future. Rather than shy away from the media and journalists we have started to embrace these platforms. Grand Lodge Secretary Bro. William Semple is in regular communication with a journalist giving positive information to print.

It has been an honour and a privilege for myself and the rest of the Commission to be Installed by Grand Lodge today something I’m sure we will all remember far into the future.

May I also take this opportunity to thank all the members of Grand Lodge for their attendance in sharing our very special day, very much appreciated.

Brethren, will you please be upstanding and join with me in raising a toast to
The Grand Lodge of Scotland.

Toast to The Daughter Lodges within the Province
By Bro. Dale W. Hall – Substitute Provincial Grand Master

It is both an honour and a pleasure to stand here before you today and pay tribute to an enduring legacy. One that has quietly shaped our communities, upheld our values, and enriched the very fabric of our Border heritage. I speak, of course, of the Daughter Lodges of this Province.

From the rolling hills of Peeblesshire to the shores of Eyemouth, the Daughter Lodges of this region have stood as beacons of fraternity, charity, and quiet strength. They have preserved the light of Masonic values through centuries of change, never losing sight of the principles of brotherhood and service.

These Lodges, some as I have alluded centuries old, have not only preserved the noble traditions of our Craft but have also played a vital role in strengthening the spirit and moral integrity that defines Border life.

Our Daughter Lodges have throughout the ages consistently demonstrated the highest ideals of our fraternity. They have opened their doors to good men, not for their wealth or title, but for the content of their character, and the strength of their principles. In doing so, have built something that transcends generations.

But let us not only dwell on the past, as noble as it is. Today, we find ourselves at a crossroads. A time when traditional institutions are being re-examined, and society is looking once again for connection, for meaning, and for service.

And this, Brethren, is where our future success lies.

Across the Borders, we are already seeing signs of renewal. Younger generations, curious and searching, are beginning to find their way into our Lodges (some of which are here today). Our community partnerships are growing. Our history is being digitised and preserved. And with the help of the internet and modern technology, we are beginning to tell our story not just within our walls, but to the world beyond them.

The work ahead is not small but it is worthy. We must continue to innovate in how we connect and contribute.

Inside our Daughter Lodges today in 2025 they continue to be more than just social gatherings. They are sanctuaries of learning, of quiet reflection, and of personal growth, and outside the Lodge room we must not overlook their contributions. Whether that's fundraising for local causes, supporting education, or simply offering a hand to a Brother in need, our Lodges have been a steadfast presence in both the good times and the hard.

As we look ahead at the start of this new chapter let us celebrate the continuity of our tradition with pride and commit ourselves anew to the Masonic virtues that have guided our brethren throughout the years.

Let today be a renewal of our commitment to our Lodges, to each other, and to the communities we serve. Let this day stand as a cornerstone of new beginning.

The future of Freemasonry in the Borders is not merely about preserving old customs. It is about living those values in a modern world. We must continue to open our doors. Not just to welcome new members, but to share openly the relevance of Freemasonry's teachings.

Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master and Brethren, I begun by indicating that it was a privilege to stand here this afternoon to propose this toast, but I must add that I am extremely proud to be associated with Freemasonry in general but also, I'm especially proud to be associated with the Daughter Lodges of this Province in particular. And I hope that Every Freemason should have that same pride in his membership of the Craft, through his Lodge, his Province and ultimately Grand Lodge.

So, brethren when I call on you to be upstanding in a moments time, let us drink not only to what these Daughter Lodges have been, but to what they continue to be, a beacon of harmony in a changing world.

The Daughter Lodges

Reply to the Toast to The Daughter Lodges within the Province
By Bro. Philip J. Titley PM – Right Worshipful Master of The Lodge of Melrose St. John No. 1²

RWPGM, Grand Lodge – RW Depute Grand Master, Distinguished Brethren and Brethren all.

Worshipful Substitute Provincial Grand Master Brother Hall, may I on behalf of the daughter Lodges of this Province thank you most sincerely for the toast you have just given.

Notes/details from Dale Halls' speech

- Traditions
- Integrity
- Building on firm base
- Entrusting Lodges
- Learning from good practice
- Trust in good leadership & direction.

Brother Thom, may I thank you for the invitation to make this reply on behalf of those Lodges – it is an honour to do so on this the occasion of the formal installation of you, Sir, and your Commissioned Office-bearers.

It is a great honour for our Lodge to have a member elected to be Provincial Grand Master, although Melrose has been fortunate to have 3 previous members elected to this high office prior to yourself since PGL was formed in 1747. I am sure all the brethren in your Province, look forward to the influence you will have on the craft in living up to the high esteem of all those that have held this office before you.

Although your Mother Lodge only joined GLOS 134 years ago in 189, it is one of the oldest if not the oldest existent organisation of its kind in Scotland if not the world that claims direct links through the operative craft and the Masons of Newstead back to the consecrations of Melrose Abbey and the Mother Abbey of Rievaulx nearly 900 years ago.

Indeed, your Province has a significant number of older Lodges in relation to the craft in Scotland and most distinctly to the total number of Lodges within the Province, with 13 of the 16 numbered below 500, It was fantastic to see all those Lodges well represented here today and present at the roll call during the ceremony.

However, it is not for me to go get on my hobby horse and fly the historical flag of your Mother Lodge or any other Lodge in the Province for that matter. It is however relevant that in noting the importance of those histories' and the foundations of both the Province and craft in general, you are encouraged to look forward and build on them in the actions that you and your commission are being challenged with in helping Freemasonry to remain relevant, attract new and committed brethren and all whilst retaining the active involvement in the development of the organisation of those more experienced members.

Let us see the work we do for and in our Lodges as a pleasure and not a toil and face the challenges ahead in a united and coherent manner that befits this fine old Provincial Grand Lodge.

We, your daughter Lodges, know there are changes going to happen during the period of your commission, but we also know that you and your office bearers will do all that you can to support your Lodges and their members whilst making those changes as seamlessly as possible whilst being respectful of our histories and traditions (although you will always have to consider the Borders aye-been.)

At the same time, we, the brethren of the Province and members of the daughter Lodges, for whom you have just accepted the charge to lead and inspire, will give you and your commission the reciprocal support to ensure the Province of the Scottish Borders continues to flourish.

Brother Hall, once again may I thank you for your toast to the Daughter Lodges and Brethren, may I thank you for the way you have received this reply.

KELSO – 16 AUGUST 2025