

# Two years of careful planning...



Iain Sharratt and the PGM at the dinner.

Planning a lavish banquet such as we 720 people had at the ICC was a daunting task, but Iain Sharratt took heart from his experience in running ladies' nights and spring balls, and the fact that he had two years' notice of the event.

He also had his wife Julie to feed in ideas and, says Iain, he "could not have done it without her."

Another key factor in sorting out the manifold detail he wanted was to buy some software called Perfect Table Plan.

The result was astonishingly personal. But the inputting of all the information was a mammoth task and he's lost count not of the hours, but of the weeks he spent on his computer.

Imagine the logistics. Seventy-six tables, the

decorations, the menu (some wanted fish not duck), the lighting, the sound, the entertainment, guiding all the guests (some upstairs, some down!) comfortably to their places for the evening, the brochures (one naming every person at the dinner and their table number), the timing - the list goes on and on.

A small army of DC's escorted most folk to their tables and the exercise worked like a dream.

## Impressive

One of the most impressive elements was the welcome card given to every guest. Each one individually printed, giving the name of the guest, their choice of menu, even the wine they had chosen. "We spent days at it on my computer at home and printed them off here," said Iain.

Having sorted out most of the concept, the Sharratts held a practice run with a dinner party at home with guests Raymond Rooke, Mike Cole, and Howard Wilson - and it obviously passed the test. At the ICC, the sound and lighting was put in the hands of Jeff Whiteley, whose business does that sort of thing.

## Monumental

Altogether, it was a monumental effort and it's fair to say that for two years Iain and Julie Sharratt ate, slept and breathed the dinner celebration that, many say, is as fine as they have ever enjoyed.

And a few days after the event, Iain relaxed with a trip he'd promised himself for 15 years. He went with three other brethren to watch the Le Mans 24-hour Race.

# A spectacular milestone for the province

The occasion demanded a memorable and spectacular event - and that's exactly what Worcestershire Masons got when they celebrated the success of the Appeal 2011.

Birmingham's International Conference Centre was the perfect venue, accustomed as it is to the big occasion. The food and wine were excellent, the service by a multitude of staff could not be faulted, but it was the heart and soul of Freemasonry that set the seal on a magnificent evening.

It was as though the warmth and brotherly love generated at lodge meetings were magnified a hundred times. Groups of ten sitting at over 70 round tables created a family atmosphere, and the feeling stretched out to envelop the whole banquet hall in a spirit of goodwill and harmony.

Throughout the dinner, Elizabeth Keetley-Smith (piano) and Julie MacRae (violin) regaled the guests with pleasant background music, then came the first big surprise of the night - a "secret door" in the wall opened and out marched the Birmingham Salvation Army Brass Band, resplendent in their bright red regalia. Trumpets blazing and drums beating, they circled the room and were on stage for the rest of the evening.

## In good heart

Presiding at the top table, R.W. Bro Richard Goddard could look around with pride at this gathering of the brethren he has ruled over for the past eight years. And the guest of honour, Deputy Grand Master, the R.W. Bro. Jonathan Spence, no doubt returned to Grand Lodge to report that the Worcestershire Province was, as he said in his speech, "in good heart." Our own Assistant PGM, W. Bro. Raymond Rooke, Chairman of the Festival Event, proposed the toast to the Royal Masonic Trust for Girls and Boys. Honoured guest W. Bro.

Les Hutchinson, Chairman of the Trust, then announced, to gasps of amazement, the result of the Appeal, that magical figure of £1,621,926 (soon to be rounded up to £1,622,000 and later to even more).

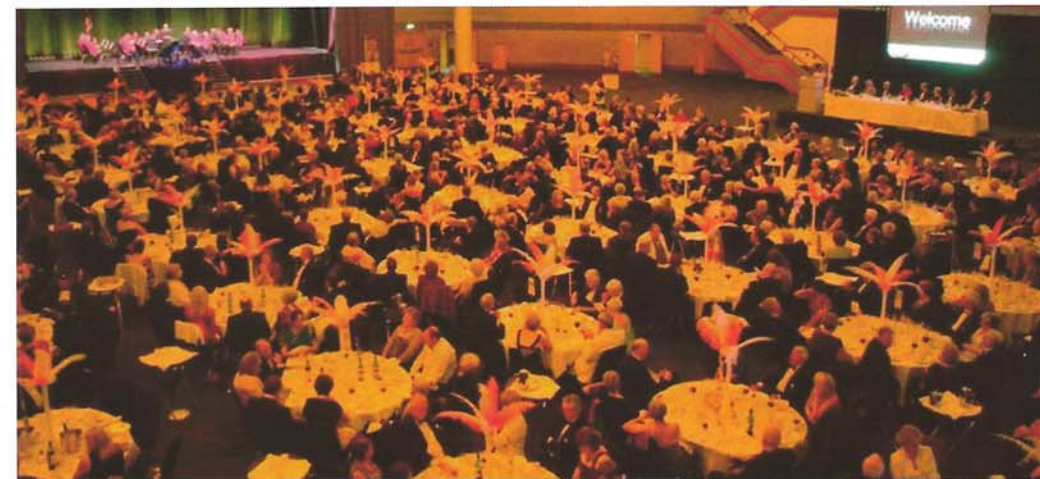
Proposing the toast to the Festival President, Jonathan Spence recalled that this was his third visit to the Province, the first being to preside at the Installation of Richard Goddard as PGM and secondly the Enthronement of Colin Brown as Grand Superintendent of Royal Arch, and he was full of praise for the achievements of Worcestershire.

## Lost for words

Responding, the PGM said he was "lost for words" at the result of the Appeal and thanked everybody for their massive support.

It was, of course, an evening of tributes, notably to Raymond Rooke, chairman of the Festival Event, Howard Wilson, chairman of the 2011 Appeal, Iain Sharratt, who organised the dinner and all that went with it, and to Jeff Whiteley, who with his team arranged the sound and lighting to such good effect.

Special thanks were voiced to the ladies for their sterling efforts in raising an impressive total of over £25,000. Then followed gifts. Flowers, of course, for the principal ladies, and to Jonathan Spence the PGM presented a piece of Stourbridge crystal, the significance being it was in this town famous for its cut-glass that Freemasonry in Worcestershire began in 1743. So, 268 years later, a most illustrious evening came to an end, proving once again that the Province is in very good shape to face the future.



The scene of splendour as the dinner at the ICC gets under way. The top table is on the right and the band plays on stage far left.



The Salvation Army Band presents a great splash of colour as they march round the banquetting before taking their seats on the stage.



Jonathan Spence shares a joke with Barry Griffin, Provincial Grand Registrar and his wife Gill.



Top table brethren on parade. Left to right: W Bro Raymond Rooke (Festival Event, Chairman), W Bro Les Hutchinson (Chief Executive RMTGB), R W Bro Jonathan Spence (Deputy Grand Master), R W Bro Richard Goddard (PGM), V W Bro Mike Woodcock (President RMTGB), and W Bro Howard Wilson (Appeal Chairman).