

2020 Convocation Nelson

February 2019 brought me two big surprises. The first was the decision of the District Chapter meeting to put me forward to be the next District Grand Superintendent and then two weeks later Max Currie telling me the arrangements for the 2020 Convocation due to be held in Blenheim had to be scrapped and would I look into it being held in Nelson.

By the Grand Convocation in Hamilton March 2019 we had not only decided we could organise it in Nelson we also had sorted out a venue for the hotel and also the Convocation Ceremony.

There then followed several months of detailed preparations – setting out a timetable of the events, agreeing contracts etc with the various organisations we would be using and also setting up a budget and preparing publicity and booking systems and materials. By June we were ready to roll.

A few glitches with the reservation system were identified and dealt with and the reservations started to roll in.

November the 4th 2019 at 7.00pm I received a call from one of the Nelson Masons whose son in law was a fireman – did I know the Masonic Hall was on fire? I went into town (a mere 5 minutes away to find the hall in flames).

A number of the events that were in the Convocation programme were scheduled for the Masonic hall and so was all the equipment that would be used for the Ceremonies. A major re-plan was needed and with the assistance of the Monaco Resort Team a new schedule and plan was put together in record time.

So what happened at the Convocation?.

First we had decided that the theme of the weekend was to be a celebration of the Nelson area and the selection of the Grand Mercure Monaco resort was a major element of that strategy. Its unique accommodation and its position would make it a special place to be. (The accommodation is either in a series of small houses or hotel rooms).



The Convocation Ceremony would be held at the newly refurbished and earthquake proofed Nelson Centre for the Musical Arts. This was selected for two reasons First the stage was elevated and all

the audience would be able to see what went on and second the newly restored pipe organ was to be used. We were honoured to have Geoffrey Coker play it for us at the ceremony.



The delegate bag contained a wide range of food and drink from the Nelson area and also a commemorative hand crafted bowl made by a local potter.

The Knights Templar Priory in Nelson performed their enactment ritual at night in the tent and on the following day held their Grand Muster.



New arrangements for food and reception of guests at the Meet and Greet and the Banquet proved to be a big success. We used Wine from the local Villa Maria winery and the food from the Monaco Kitchen was excellent in both quality and quantity. The young team of waiting staff was unobtrusive and very efficient – a credit to the management team at Monaco.

The Banquet was held in the Marque and the subdued lighting and the informal seating and that it was in a tent made it a special event.



The ladies and others bus tours (two of them) also proved to a great hit as they featured a number of opportunities for the many attractions of the area to be seen close-up.

Overall it was a great success and we are confident that those attending left with a positive opinion of Nelson and this District

May thanks must go the rest of the Convocation Committee, The Management teams of the Monaco resort (Tabitha and Jazz) The Nelson Centre of Musical Arts, Day Out and Nelson Coach Lines (who provided the transport services), Nelson Regional Development team, and of course my ever present partner Ronnie

David Marsh

Grand Superintendent Nelson/Marlborough/Westland