

Provincial Grand Chapter of Worcestershire



A Guide to Royal Arch Masons



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Provincial Office, 94 Birmingham Road, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire, B61 0DF

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This booklet is for all Royal Arch Masons in the Province of Worcestershire. It is hoped that it will be of particular interest to new members and is written with them in mind. It is intended that it be given to all Exaltees in the Province together with the Peterborough No 4 Booklet, *Notes for a Newly Exalted Companion*, which explains the ceremony of Exaltation and the history of the Order.

Welcome to new members

If you have recently been Exalted into Royal Arch Masonry in a Chapter in the Province of Worcestershire or have become a joining member of a Chapter in the Province for the first time, welcome. As a newly Exalted member we do not expect you to know everything. In particular, if you arrive late for a meeting shortly after Exaltation, ask the Janitor (who has a similar role to the Tyler in Craft) to remind you what you should do and where you should stand when you enter.

When you read the section on “The History of the Royal Arch” you will begin to understand why Royal Arch has such a close link with Craft and complements the teachings of the Craft. Not only is the Exaltation ceremony impressive and moving, but, the message in the order helps one to better understand the teachings of Craft Masonry and should enhance your enjoyment of Craft. This is better explained in the leaflet “Next Regular Step” which you should already have received (if not ask Scribe E to obtain one for you). There are also two passages at the bottom of page 19 and the top of page 20 in the current Worcestershire Royal Arch Ritual Book, which should help you understand what Royal Arch is about.

Recruitment

The United Grand Lodge of England believes that all Craft Masons should join Royal Arch which is considered an integral part of the Craft and completes the teachings of Craft. Despite this, only 30/40% of Craft Masons ever become Royal Arch Masons. In Worcestershire the number is 38%. Of course, many committed Craft Masons have good reason not to join Royal Arch - perhaps the cost or time involved or maybe a lack of inclination or being told that they will not like it might dissuade them.



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We hope that you will give those who have not joined a positive impression of Royal Arch and, where appropriate, gently suggest that they might like to consider joining. However, where it becomes apparent that a Brother is not inclined to join, do not try to sell it too hard. No one should feel under pressure to join and pressurising someone can do more harm than good. In particular, when the Provincial Grand Master (or his Deputy or the Assistant PGMs) take wine with Royal Arch Masons at the festive board after a Craft Installation, anyone who is not a Royal Arch Mason should not be made to feel embarrassed. There should be no shouts of “take his name”. That said if you become aware that a Brother sitting next to you is not in Royal Arch, should the opportunity arise, ask him courteously if he has ever considered joining : you will either get a sharp rebuff, in which case change the subject or you might get an inquiry for more information. As stated above, there is a leaflet for Craft Masons “Next Regular Step” explaining Royal Arch which your Lodge Royal Arch Representative should have.

Attending Chapter Meetings

Meetings of Chapters are called Convocations. Find out the dates of future meetings and put them in your diary so that you do not double book. When you receive a summons, reply as soon as you are able and indicate if you will be dining. If you book a meal and do not attend, expect to be asked to pay for the meal. Summonses are usually sent out by Scribe E (who is the equivalent of the Secretary in a Craft Lodge). The summons will indicate who you should reply to as this is not always Scribe E. Note the start time and ensure that you are there in plenty of time to put on your regalia and take your seat before then.

The Chapter room is set out with the Three Principals seats in the East and the Sojourners seats in the West. The entrance to the room is usually in or near to the West. Companions of the Chapter who have not been through the Chairs of a Chapter will usually sit in the North West and if there are no seats free, in the South West. A sketch of the layout of a Chapter room is in the inner front cover of the Worcestershire ritual book.

The Provincial Principals, Grand Officers and Acting Provincial Officers will sit in the North East. If the Provincial Representative is present, he should sit immediately next to the Chapter’s Haggai unless one of the Provincial Principals or the Deputy Grand Superintendent is in attendance. In this case the Provincial Principal takes



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precedence although, if he is just a visitor, he may prefer the Provincial representative to sit on his left next to Haggai, give greetings from the Province and respond to toast 5.

Chapter meeting should be conducted with a degree of dignity and decorum but nonetheless should be convivial. Companions should retire from the Chapter room having enjoyed the meeting. Remember that the festive board is still part of the meeting and whilst Companions will, hopefully, have enjoyed themselves, the festive board should be conducted with dignity, particularly the questions which follow immediately after the grace after the meal.

The grace is in Latin and is “Benedictus Benedicat” (may the blessed one bless us) before the meal and “Benedicto Benedicatur” (may the blessed one be blessed) after the meal. The Latin response is “Deo Gracias” (thanks be to God) although in some Chapters “so mote it be” continues to be the response. Both are used in Worcestershire and it is preferable for the Director of Ceremonies (DC) to advise the Companions which is to be used immediately prior to the first grace. A phonetic guide to pronunciation is given at pages 106 and 107 of the Worcestershire Royal Arch ritual book.

The fire is different in Royal Arch. By now you should have experienced it. If you are unsure how to do it, ask the DC to show you. A diagram of the fire is on the back inside cover of the ritual book. Craft fire is used for the Janitor’s toast. This is sometimes given seated and in silence.

Salutes

No officers are saluted in Royal Arch. When you enter the Chapter room after the Chapter has opened, you should walk to the West facing the pedestal in the middle of the room and give the reverential or hailing sign directed towards the pedestal. You should also do this when leaving before the Chapter is closed. Always discharge the sign before speaking. At all other times when addressing the MEZ you should give a court bow before speaking. A court bow is given by a brisk lowering of the head bending the neck for a short period. No other part of the body should move.



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Titles

All members of the Order who have not been Installed as a Principal carry the title “Companion”. All Companions who have been Installed in one of the Principal’s chairs is titled “Excellent Companion”. The First Principal of a Chapter also bears the title Most Excellent Zerubbabel. The Grand Superintendent is addressed as Excellent Companion [name] but also bears the title Most Excellent Grand Superintendent. The term “Companion” is from the Latin : “Companio” from the late Latin means “one who eats bread with another”, derived from “com” meaning “with” and “panis” meaning “bread”.



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Chapter, Provincial and Grand Officers

Chapter Officers

Every Chapter has three Principals who conjointly rule over the Chapter. They are:-

The First Principal also known as Most Excellent Zerubbabel (MEZ).

The Second Principal known as Excellent Companion Haggai (H).

The Third Principal known as Excellent Companion Joshua (J).

In practice you may find that the MEZ often makes some decisions with minimal involvement of the other two Principals.

The MEZ is generally seen as the most senior of the three offices. Only an Excellent Companion who has been Installed into a Chair may take the Sceptre and Robe of that Chair and sit in it. However, the alternative, new lectures (p108 to 114 Worcestershire Royal Arch ritual book) may be given by a Companion below the Chairs but the manner of sharing the Sacred Name must be conducted by the MEZ or a past Z.

Other offices are:-

Scribe Ezra (Scribe E) who is the secretary of the Chapter.

Scribe Nehemiah (Scribe N) who acts as Inner Guard.

Treasurer.

Director of Ceremonies.

Principal Sojourner (P Soj) plays a role similar to a Deacon but has a much more substantial and dramatic speaking part.

First Assistant Sojourner (1st Ass Soj) assists the P Soj and sometimes will undertake some of the P Soj's work.

Second Assistant Sojourner (2nd Ass Soj) assists if 1st Ass Soj not available.

Almoner.

Charity Steward.

Janitor undertakes role Tyler does in Craft.

Provincial Officers

The Province is headed by:-

The Most Excellent Grand Superintendent.

The Deputy Grand Superintendent.



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The Second Provincial Grand Principal.

The Third Provincial Grand Principal.

The remaining officers are similar to that of a Chapter with the addition of:-

A sword bearer.

Three standard bearers.

The Grand Superintendent receives a Patent from the First Grand Principal for a number of years often up to 10. He appoints the Deputy Grand Superintendent who usually remains in office for 4 years, the Second Provincial Grand Principal who usually remains in office for 2 years and the Third Provincial Grand Principal who serves for a year.

All Chapters in the Province are required to work within the regulations of the Province.

Supreme Grand Chapter

Supreme Grand Chapter is headed by:-

The First Grand Principal.

The Pro First Grand Principal.

The Second Grand Principal.

The Third Grand Principal.

Supreme Grand Chapter issues the Regulations for the Order which are included in the Craft Book of Constitutions. All Provinces and Chapters must comply with the Regulations and directions of Supreme Grand Chapter.

Appointment to Grand Rank and Provincial Grand Rank

Appointment to Grand Rank is at the discretion of the M E Grand Superintendent. Appointment to Provincial Grand Rank is again at the discretion of the M E Grand Superintendent. However, Excellent Companions are normally considered for Provincial Grand Rank three years after they have been installed in the Z Chair. They may then be considered for a promotion after a further 6 years.



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Dress Code

Regalia

Regalia consists of an apron, a sash and a breast jewel. The apron is also referred to as a “badge” and the sash as a “ribbon”. Put on the sash first over the left shoulder and under the right arm.

Put on the apron with the strap threaded through the sash so that the sash is over the apron strap at the front but under it at the back. This method of threading the strap is not practised in many other Provinces where the strap is either worn on top of or underneath the sash.

The sash for a Companion has an emblem embroidered on a white background and has silk tassels. The sash from Principals and Past Principals has an emblem embroidered on a crimson background and has gold or metal gilt tassels. The sash for a Provincial Officer has an emblem embroidered on a dark blue background and has gold or metal gilt tassels.

For a Companion, the apron backing and tassel ribbons and the ribbon on the jewel are white. For Principals and past Principals they are crimson and for Provincial and Grand Officers the apron backing and tassel ribbons are dark blue and the jewel ribbon is tri-coloured.

A Provincial Grand Officer who has not been a Principal wears a Provincial Officer's apron on which is attached the badge of his Provincial rank together with a breast jewel with a white ribbon. The background on the emblem on the sash is dark blue but the tassels are silk. The jewel is worn on the left breast. If you are wearing more than one jewel, it should always be the right most. No Craft jewels are worn in Royal Arch although currently approved Craft charity jewels may be worn. You should also wear your Royal Arch jewel at a Craft meeting again being the right-most jewel worn.

Provincial Officers and Grand Officers also wear a collar. Past Provincial Principals also wear a Past Principals jewel which, like other Masonic regalia is only worn in the Chapter room and should not be worn in Craft.



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Clothing

All Companions are encouraged to wear the Worcestershire Provincial Royal Arch tie. Companions may, as an alternative, wear a black, Grand Lodge or Supreme Grand Chapter tie. Companions from other Provinces are permitted to wear their Provincial Grand Chapter tie. When a Provincial Royal Arch tie is available, all companions will be encouraged to wear it.

You should dress in a dark suit or morning suit as for Craft meetings. The Provincial Grand Principals, Grand Officers and the Provincial DC and his deputies and assistants normally wear tailcoats at Provincial Convocations.

Gloves are worn in some Chapters, although not all : they are not worn in Worcestershire Provincial Grand Chapter. Gloves should never be worn by an Excellent Companion who is occupying one of the three Principal's Chairs. Gloves should also be removed to take any obligation. All obligations are taken on an OPEN VSL.

Installations

The Province sends a team of Provincial Rulers to all Installation meetings of Chapters within the Province. The team will consist of the Grand Superintendent or his Deputy and the Second and Third Provincial Grand Principals together with the Provincial Director of Ceremonies.

It is customary for them to open the Chapter and undertake all of the ceremonial up to the point of declaring the Chapter open. Thereafter, they undertake certain roles to assist the Chapter and give three addresses. The Three Provincial Principals sit in the three seats to the immediate right of the Chapter Haggai. The Provincial DC between the IPZ and the Chapter DC.



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Historic significance of the various Officers of a Chapter

Zerubbabel

Zerubbabel was a prince of Judah and governor of Jerusalem, a position to which he was appointed by Cyrus, King of Persia, when he permitted the captive Jews in Babylon to return to Judah. Born in Babylon during the Babylonian captivity, he was a descendant of King David and a grandson of Jehoiachin, King of Judah, at the time that the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar took them into captivity.

Haggai

Haggai was a prophet, about whom little is known apart from his prophesy that there would be pestilence and drought because of the failure of the people to finish the rebuilding of the Temple. Haggai declared that God was punishing them for decorating their own houses before completing the house of the Lord, and he urges Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, and Joshua, the high priest, to rally the people to their primary task.

Joshua

Joshua was high priest during the rebuilding of the Temple. He was the son of Josedech and grandson of Seraiah who was high priest when the Temple was destroyed by the forces of the Babylonish General. He reinstituted the correct Temple rituals, without which the older beliefs and practices of Judaism might have been lost. The story in the Exaltation ceremony indicates that Zerubbabel, Haggai and Joshua presided over the rebuilding of the Temple, destroyed by King Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BC.

Ezra

Ezra, a priest and scribe, was a leading figure in the revival of Judaism in the land of Israel after the Babylonian captivity. Ezra, a scholar and teacher, was given official sanction to teach the law, appoint magistrates, offer sacrifices, and beautify the Temple. He was the person responsible for defining both Temple worship and the canon of scripture for his time. Ezra certainly had a part in making the Jews the "People of the Book". The book of Ezra describes the rebuilding of the Temple, which is reported in detail elsewhere only in the books of Haggai and Zechariah. Since this story is central to the Royal Arch story, you may wish to consult it.



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Nehemiah

Nehemiah was a 5th century BC Jewish leader. He held a position of honour in the court of the Persian King Artaxerxes I and in 444 BC was appointed by the king to the governorship of Judea, with authorisation to rebuild Jerusalem. The rebuilding of Jerusalem and the reforms made during his administration are recounted in the book that bears his name.

The Sojourners

A sojourner is one who arrives as a stranger with every intention of moving on in due course. The ritual relates how three sojourners who arrived to help with the rebuilding work proved pivotal in rediscovering the lost secrets, offering the message that those employed on lowly tasks may attain the highest honours through zeal and industry.

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