



**Province of Yorkshire, West Riding
Royal Arch Chapter**

**Guide for
Royal Arch Masons**

Dear Companion,

Congratulations on being exalted into the Royal Arch, the fourth and final step, the culmination of your Masonic journey through 'Pure Ancient Freemasonry'.

That part of your journey of discovery, represented by the experience of Ceremonies is now complete, but your 'journey of understanding' has just begun.

Knowledge and understanding of the symbolism and teachings to be found in the Craft and Royal Arch was never intended to be easy. Such acquisition takes time, patience and endeavour that may last a lifetime, but nothing of true value was ever achieved with ease.

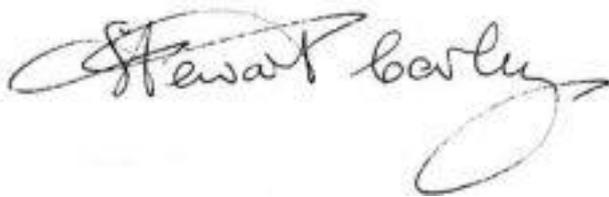
The Royal Arch is described as the climax, the pinnacle of Freemasonry.

First and foremost, it is a caring Order where "The eternal welfare of Man is considered in every part, point, and letter of its ineffable mysteries", and we rightly refer to each other as "Companions".

I sincerely hope that over time you will develop a deep affection for the Royal Arch and that it will become an integral part of your life and being.

With every good wish for your future in the Royal Arch.

Yours sincerely and fraternally,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Stewart Carley". The signature is written in dark ink and has a fluid, connected style.

Stewart G Carley
Grand Superintendent

Preamble

The following was given to the Candidate to read prior to entering the Chapter for his Exaltation Ceremony, and known as "The Janitors Card":

"The story about to unfold, on entering the Chapter, takes place some 500 years after the dedication of Solomon's Temple. King Solomon has long since died. Jerusalem has been attacked by the Babylonians, the city and its once magnificent temple has been destroyed and its inhabitants taken into captivity into Babylon where they remained for 70 years.

We are now at that period in history where the Babylonian Empire itself has been attacked and defeated by Cyrus, King of Persia. Cyrus has recently issued a decree allowing the descendants of the Hebrew exiles to return to Jerusalem.

As the Candidate for Exaltation, you represent one of those exiles returning to Jerusalem as a Sojourner or Journeyman builder. You discover that the Temple and Holy city are in ruins and, with your colleagues, offer your assistance in building a new temple when, as you will eventually see, a discovery of very great importance is made."

Introduction

Companion, we offer you a warm welcome into the Supreme order of the Holy Royal Arch, 'at once the foundation and keystone of the whole Masonic structure'. There are bound to be many questions that have arisen in your mind about the ceremony in which you have taken part and about the Rules and Regulations governing the Order.

These notes set out, in some measure, to address these questions. They have been developed and 'customised' for Yorkshire, West Riding from guidance brought together from several other Provinces and Supreme Grand Chapter, for which their contribution is acknowledged with grateful thanks.

This guidance document is by no means a comprehensive set of answers but should give you an introduction to the Order and it will hopefully stimulate your interest. Your Proposer, Personal Mentor or Chapter Mentor will be happy to answer any further questions which may arise.

Having been Exalted into the Order, you have been invested with your Royal Arch regalia and on a future occasion you will receive your Royal Arch Certificate. By being Exalted you have advanced further on your Masonic journey through Pure, Antient Freemasonry, which started with the Three Degrees of Craft masonry.

What is the Royal Arch?

Masonry being a progressive science, it is not surprising that there is a clear implication in the ceremony of the Third Degree that there is more to learn. The simple fact that you have been Exalted into the Royal Arch shows that you not only appreciate this but are also keen to gain a higher understanding of the purpose of our mortal existence. The Royal Arch is concerned with truth in the light of eternity and tries to meet this need.

It is a beautiful and historical Order. Its deeper meaning is less apparent than that of Craft Freemasonry and the Order challenges every member to discover this for himself and as he looks beyond his mortal existence to the light of eternity.

When did Royal Arch begin?

The Royal Arch was at one time described as the completion of the Third Degree. This description was inaccurate and is no longer used. More correctly, it is the completion of pure, antient Masonry. This, since the Union of 1813, has been declared to have consisted of the three degrees of the Entered Apprentice, the Fellow Craft, and the Master Mason, *including* the 'Supreme Order of the Holy Royal Arch'.

The origins of the Royal Arch are shrouded in mystery, but it emerged around the early 1700's, long before it was to receive its eventual name as the Royal Arch.

At this time there were no separate Chapters, neither was there a 'ceremony' such as we have today, rather it took the form of a catechism of questions and answers worked in a Craft Lodge, (which reminds us that the Royal Arch always was and still is an integral part of pure antient Masonry).

By the mid -18th century the Royal Arch was being widely worked in Lodges and in the early 1760's the first independent Chapters began to appear. In 1766 the first or Premier Grand Chapter was established, to be followed a few years later by a second Grand Chapter, set up by the rival Grand Lodge of the Antients. The two finally came together in 1813 to form the United Grand Chapter of England. In 1821 this was renamed to the name we know today - **The Supreme Grand Chapter**.

A more complete record of these events is given in a separate leaflet, "The History of Supreme Grand Chapter" available from the Supreme Grand Chapter web site www.supremegrandchapter.org.uk

The ritual and ceremonies used today became regularised in the 1830's, but as you would expect, the passage of time has led to minor differences in the ceremonies of individual Chapters.

Most Candidates find the ceremony of Exaltation both moving and impressive, but as experience of the ritual increases so does one's appreciation of the significance of the messages contained within it.

About the Chapter

How often do Chapters meet?

Most Chapters only meet around four or five times a year, with one of these being the Installation. Meetings are referred to as Convocations and, as in the Craft, you will receive a Summons (sometimes known as a Precept in the Royal Arch) to attend.

Is there a qualification for joining?

Membership is open to all Brethren who have been a Master Mason for a period of at least 4 weeks, and who are subscribing members of a Craft Lodge.

Who is Scribe E?

There are two Scribes in a Chapter - Scribe Ezra and Scribe Nehemiah, normally abbreviated to Scribe E. and Scribe N. The Scribe E. is the equivalent of the Secretary in a Craft Lodge and the Scribe N. is rather like an Inner Guard, except that he is a higher-ranking officer. The later section on Chapter Officers gives some historical details of these two individuals.

What is the dress code?

Basically, it is the same as Craft and is usually specified on the Chapter Summons. When visiting always take gloves with you as most, but not all Chapters wear them.

As regards ties, you have the choice of a plain black tie, the Provincial tie, the Grand Lodge tie (which may also be worn in Chapter) or the Royal Arch tie. Remember a Provincial tie should not be worn at meetings outside that Province.

The Royal Arch jewel of the Order with the colour of its ribbon indicating your seniority in Royal Arch, should always be worn in Chapter and in all Craft Lodges. It must be worn on the left breast as the inner-most jewel.

Past Principals jewels, or Chapter Centenary jewels should only be worn in Chapters, and not be worn in Craft Lodges.



Companion



**Principal
(or Past Principal)**



Provincial Officer

Are there any special seating arrangements?

The Chapter Officers have designated seats and, as in the Craft, the Grand and Provincial Grand Officers generally sit in the North-East, with the Past Principals of the Chapter sitting in the South-East.

You may sit anywhere in the general body of the Chapter room, but initially it is recommended that you sit next to your Proposer, Seconder, or Personal Mentor if their office does not preclude this.

What do I do if I arrive late?

The Janitor (the Chapter's equivalent to the Tyler) will make sure you are signed in and properly clothed. If you are unsure what to do, just ask him, particularly if you are a visitor. When ready he will give knocks on the door to announce that you are requesting admission.

On admission, it is usual to go to the West in front of the Sojourners, give the Reverential or Hailing sign towards the pedestal (not to the 3 Principals) offer your apologies and then take a seat.

In the Royal Arch a step is not taken when the sign is given, and the sign should always be discharged before speaking.

In most Chapters when arriving late, after saluting the pedestal, take the most direct route to a seat, rather than "squaring" the room.

What are the salutes in the Royal Arch?

There are no salutes to any individual in Royal Arch Masonry. The Reverential or Hailing sign is used in the Opening & Closing ceremonies, as well as on entering the Chapter if late (see above), or if leaving the Chapter early.

It is always given to the pedestal and not to the Principals.

Sometimes a court bow is given, especially when addressing the Principals. You should go through the correct way of giving the Reverential or Hailing sign with your Personal Mentor, it will help you feel relaxed knowing it is right.

The Right thumb must never be squared to the fingers when giving signs in Royal Arch, such as the sign of Fidelity, and should always be kept from view. In the case of the sign of prayer, you should always use the sign you were taught in your Chapter.

How should a court bow be given?

The court bow is given by a brisk lowering of the head bending the neck for a brief period. No other part of the body forms any part of the movement.

Are there many Practice Nights?

Most Chapters only have one or at the most two rehearsals before a Convocation, you will get the most out of your Chapter membership if you attend these, and particularly if you hold office, or have ritual to deliver at the forthcoming meeting.

As in Craft, whenever possible attempt should be made to deliver ritual from memory, with rehearsals intended to practice what you have already learnt.

Personal circumstances may on occasion make attendances at rehearsals or Convocations impossible, but if you hold office in your Chapter, you should aim to attend at least one rehearsal before the ceremony.

Sceptres and Robes.

Each of the Three Principals carries a Sceptre as a symbol of authority, similar to gavels in a Craft Lodge. They also wear robes of colours appropriate to their office. These robes are usually explained in the Installation ceremony.

Is there an established ladder to the Principals chairs?

This can vary by individual Chapter. The most important thing is that you should only progress at a pace which suits you. Do not feel it necessary to take office at the first opportunity, and do not take on too many Masonic offices at the same time. If you feel you are being pressured into taking office too quickly, have a word with your Personal Mentor or Proposer, and politely decline to accept the post offered.

Remember your commitments to your family and business are far more important than Masonic advancement. It is perhaps best to tailor your progress by the date you feel it would be most convenient for you to arrive at the First Principal's Chair.

Discuss this with your Personal Mentor and/or Proposer, who will help you attain your objective if possible.

What should I know about the Festive Board?

The Festive Board in Chapter is much the same as in Craft except that often there are certain Latin graces prescribed – '*Benedictus, Benedicat*' (may the Blessed One bless) before the meal and '*Benedicto, Benedicatur*' (may the Blessed One be blessed) after it.

The phonetic pronunciation of these graces is 'Ben-ne-dic-tuss, Ben-ne-de-cat' (the syllable 'cat' being stressed) and 'Ben-ne-dic-toe, Ben-ne-de-car-tour' (the syllable 'car' being stressed).

The Toasts and responses are similar to the Craft, but you should seek the help of a more experienced Companion regarding the introduction to any toast. This may vary depending upon which toast you are proposing. In some Chapters it is the custom to hold the glass in the left hand when toasting *Masonic Toasts*. Practice varies throughout the Province (which results in much discussion).

The Chapter

Does every Lodge have a Chapter?

No. There are roughly three times as many Lodges as Chapters, but every Chapter has an identifying Chapter Number which is that of the Craft Lodge which sponsored the Chapters creation.

Should candidates be exalted into the Chapter associated with their Craft Lodge?

No, not necessarily. Candidates are free to join any Chapter they wish which meets on a night and in a location which is convenient to them. Many Brethren deliberately pick a Chapter where they do not know many members, using it to make new Masonic friends from other Lodges and Masonic centres.

It is not unusual for a Companion to change Chapters, as his circumstances, or preferred meeting nights may change.

Why does the Chapter layout differ from that of a Lodge?

The layout of a Royal Arch Chapter Room differs from that of a Lodge Room because there are three Principals (as compared with one Worshipful Master in the Craft) and use is made of the central floor space (bounded by the Ensigns of the twelve tribes of Israel).

These differences are fundamental to the Royal Arch story of the rebuilding of the Temple. The other differences are less obvious apart from no pedestals being used by the officers.

Is there a particular position for each ensign?

Yes, the arrangement of the ensigns is based on the instructions given to Moses in Numbers, Chapter Two, and is further amplified in the third section of the Royal Arch lecture.

What do the initials on the pedestal stand for?

SRI stands for the Latin for Solomon King of Israel. HRT stands for Hiram King of Tyre and HA stands for Hiram Abif - the three Grand Masters who presided at the building of the first Temple at Jerusalem.

On the top of the pedestal is a plate of gold on which is represented a triangle, on a circle together with the sacred name.

What were those five carved stones on the floor for?

(Note that not every Chapter has them).

They are the 'Five Regular Platonic Bodies'; the Tetrahedron (representing fire), Octahedron (Air), Cube (Earth), Icosahedron (Water) and Dodecahedron (Sphere of the Universe), which are arranged North to South in that order. These are more fully explained during the Symbolical Lecture.

What are the banners in the East?

These are known as the principal banners and represent the leading standards of the four divisions of the army of Israel. They show an Ox, a Man, a Lion and an Eagle.

They were incorporated into the Arms of the 'Atholl or Antients' Grand Lodge, which first appeared in 1764, highlighting the very close connection between the 'Antients' Grand Lodge and the Royal Arch.

A fifth banner, that of the Triple Tau contained within a triangle on a circle is also displayed in the East in most Chapters.

The banners are explained further in the Symbolical Lecture.

The Chapter Officers

Is there an order of precedence for Chapter Officers?

Yes, and it differs from the order in the Craft. For example, in the Royal Arch the Scribe E (Secretary) comes before the Treasurer.

First come the three Principals - Zerubbabel (Z), Haggai (H) and Joshua (J). Next come the two Scribes Ezra (E) and Nehemiah (N).

The Treasurer, Director of Ceremonies, Almoner and Charity Steward are followed by the Principal Sojourner (PS) and his first and second Assistant Sojourners, (sometimes known as Senior and Junior Assistant Sojourners).

The Assistant Director of Ceremonies, Organist, Assistant Scribe Ezra, and Stewards complete the list.

A Chapter also has a Janitor - in many respects like the Tyler in the Craft.

What are the qualifications for the three Principals' Chairs?

All three must be elected annually by the Companions of the Chapter. To be eligible for election to Joshua, a Companion must have served as a Sojourner or a Scribe. (It is no longer a requirement to have served as Worshipful Master in a Craft Lodge which was once necessary).

To be eligible for election to Haggai, he must have served as Joshua and for Zerubbabel, he must have served as Haggai. The title Past Zerubbabel (PZ) applies to those who have served as First Principal and is equivalent to the title of Past Master (PM) in the Craft.

Why three Principals?

The Historical Lecture tells us that Zerubbabel, Haggai and Joshua presided over the rebuilding of the Temple, destroyed in 586 BC by King Nebuchadnezzar. These three are represented by the three Principals.

The Principals are to be considered conjointly and severally equal in status, (which does not correspond with the relationship between the WM and his Wardens in the Craft).

What does the term 'Companion' mean?

Members of the Chapter are called Companions, equivalent to Brethren in the Craft. The term means 'one who eats bread with another' and is derived from the Latin 'com' meaning 'with' and 'panis' meaning 'bread'.

What does E. Comp mean?

E. Comp. stands for Excellent Companion. This is the title conferred on a Companion when he is installed in his first Chair, that of J (Joshua), and is retained by all Principals and past Principals.

Note that the office of the First Principal has the title 'Most Excellent' attached to it, but the Companion filling the office is still known as Excellent Comp.

Who was 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.

Who was 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 urged Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, and Joshua, the high priest, to rally the people to their primary task.

Who was Joshua?

Joshua was a High Priest during the rebuilding of the temple. He was the son of Josedech and grandson of Seraiah, who was the High Priest when the Temple was destroyed by the forces of the Babylonish General.

He reinstated the correct temple rituals, without which the older beliefs and practices of Judaism might have been lost.

Who was 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 Old Testament book of Ezra describes the rebuilding of the Temple, which is reported in detail elsewhere only in the books of Haggai and Zechariah.

Who was Nehemiah?

Nehemiah was a 5th Century BC Jewish Leader. He held a position of honour in the court of the Persian King Artaxerxes 1st 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.

What is the significance of being a Sojourner?

A Sojourner is one who arrives as a stranger, with the intention of moving on in due course.

The ritual relates how the 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 their zeal and industry.

Regalia

What are the main differences between Craft and Chapter regalia?

In the Royal Arch the apron (or badge) is worn with a sash (or ribbon) which is worn over the left shoulder, and the jewel of the Order (or insignia).

How does the apron indicate rank?

The apron flap and sash for a Companion have gilt triangles with a white silk backing, the jewel also has a white ribbon.

The apron flap and sash of a Principal or Past Principal have gilt triangles with a crimson silk backing, the jewel has a crimson ribbon.

The apron flap and sash of a Provincial or Grand Officer have gilt triangles with a dark blue silk backing, the jewel has a light blue, crimson and dark blue ribbon.

In each case the ribbons bearing the apron tassels are the same colour as the backing of the triangles



Should I wear my Craft Jewels in Chapter?

No, Craft jewels should not be worn in a Chapter meeting except for any current Craft Charity (i.e., festival) jewel.

Should I wear my Royal Arch Jewel in a Craft Lodge?

Yes, it is the one jewel which should always be worn in a Craft Lodge and by brethren of all Masonic rank.

Should the Royal Arch Jewel be worn in a particular place?

The Royal Arch jewel takes precedence over all other Masonic jewels and is worn on the left breast nearest the centre of the body, (in both Royal Arch and Craft).

Why does it take this precedence?

At the formation of the United Grand Lodge of England in 1813 the close relationship between the Royal Arch and Craft was recognised by decreeing that the Royal Arch jewel took precedence over all other jewels.

Supreme Grand Chapter

What is Supreme Grand Chapter?

The full title is Supreme Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of England. It is the governing body of the Holy Royal Arch in England and was formed in 1817.

Who is its head?

The head of Supreme Grand Chapter is the First Grand Principal and is normally, the same person as the head of the Craft, i.e., the Grand Master of the United Grand Lodge of England.

If the Grand Master is a Prince of the Blood Royal and has appointed a Pro Grand Master, then he normally becomes Pro First Grand Principal. They are assisted by the Second Grand Principal and the Third Grand Principal (who is often a cleric).

Provincial Grand Chapter

What is Provincial Grand Chapter?

The Provincial Grand Chapter is the Royal Arch equivalent of Provincial Grand Lodge.

The head of a Provincial Grand Chapter is titled, the Most Excellent Grand Superintendent (often abbreviated to MEGS) In most Provinces the MEGS is also the Provincial Grand Master of the Craft, but currently in Yorkshire West Riding they are not the same person.

The MEGS is also the First of the three Provincial Grand Principals and is supported by a Deputy Grand Superintendent, and three Assistants to the Provincial Grand Principals, whose duties are in many respects like the Deputy and Assistant Provincial Grand Masters in the Craft.

As in the Craft, every year several companions receive appointments or promotions to Acting or Past Provincial Grand rank.

The Provincial Grand Chapter meets once a year (currently in November). All Royal Arch Masons are entitled and welcome to attend.

Local Organisation

Royal Arch Contacts and Mentors

In the Province of Yorkshire, West Riding, each Royal Arch Chapter has been requested to appoint a Personal Mentor for each new Companion (often his Proposer or Seconder) to ensure that they are well looked after. He is the person you should initially turn to for help, advice, and support. Those Personal Mentors are in turn supported by the Chapter Mentor, Area Mentor, and the Provincial Royal Arch Mentor.

Similarly, each Craft Lodge has also been requested to appoint an experienced member to be the 'Royal Arch Representative' in the Lodge.

His role is to raise awareness of the Royal Arch in the Lodge, talk to brethren about the Order and, when they are ready, to encourage them to join a Chapter which meets at a convenient time and convenient location.

What are Royal Arch Councils?

The Province of Yorkshire West Riding is unique, with Chapters being supported and assisted in several ways by Royal Arch Councils in six geographical areas within the Province.

These Councils encourage and promote fraternal visiting and endeavour to provide a representative visitor at each Chapter meeting, with the President often attending Installation meetings.

To whom should I address any other questions?

In the first instance to your Personal Mentor, your proposer, seconder, or the Chapter Mentor. Alternatively, the Chapter Scribe E.

Summary

This booklet started by welcoming you to the Royal Arch, and so it seems fitting to end by wishing you a long and happy membership within the Royal Arch.

It is a beautiful and historical Order. Its deeper meaning is less apparent than that of Craft Freemasonry and the Order challenges every member to discover this for himself and as he looks beyond his mortal existence to the light of eternity.

Above all it is a happy and friendly Order which we hope you will enjoy and into which you will want to introduce your Masonic friends.

Please try to visit other Chapters in your area where you will make new friends, and witness the many slight variations in ceremonies, adding to your enjoyment of this wonderful Order of Masonry.

Useful Details:

My Regular Chapter Meeting Dates:

My Proposer:

My Seconder:

My Personal Mentor:

My Chapter Mentor:

My Chapter Scribe Ezra:

My Chapter Website:

Provincial Grand Chapter: Website: **www.pgc-ywr.org**
Facebook: **@pgcywr**
Instagram: **@pgcywr**
Twitter: **@pgcywr**

Supreme Grand Chapter Website: **www.supremegrandchapter.org.uk**

With grateful thanks to both Supreme Grand Chapter, and the Masonic Province of Cumberland & Westmorland for parts of this booklet.

*Booklet 1
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