

Provincial Grand Chapter of Sussex Edited April-25

Royal Arch Membership Presentation – Part 1

'It is declared and pronounced that pure Antient Masonry consists of three degrees, and no more, viz. those of the Entered Apprentice, the Fellow Craft, and the Master Mason, including the Supreme Order of the Holy Royal Arch.'

Duke of Sussex, Grand Master, 1813.

Brethren,

We would normally start this evening's presentation by taking a few minutes to review the three degrees in Craft Freemasonry through which you have already passed, however, this part of the presentation has been edited to allow all Masons to listen to.

If you cast your mind back to your interview before being accepted as a Candidate for Freemasonry you might remember you were asked the question: "Do you have a belief in a Supreme Being?" Your personal beliefs are something that should always be treated with respect, they are your privilege and not something to be challenged, but one of the things that we all have in common is that we all answered "yes" to that question.

Which means that we all agree that we have a spiritual side to our nature as well as a physical one; we are creatures of our creator and after a sojourn on this earth, we will return to that creator.

Having said "yes" to that question, after your interview – you were then Initiated, taking your first step into Freemasonry, 'helpless', 'poor and penniless' and completely reliant on the Junior Deacon who guided you through the ceremony. You were compared with a *'Rough Ashlar - A stone rough and unhewed as taken from the quarry, until by the industry and ingenuity of the workman it is modelled, wrought into due form, and rendered fit for the intended structure; this represented man in his infant and primitive state, rough*

and unpolished as that stone, until by the kind care and attention of his parents or guardian, in giving him a liberal and virtuous education, his mind becomes cultivated, and he is thereby rendered a fit member of a civilised society.'

It is easy to see that your Initiation can be compared to your birth, when you came, helpless, into the world. The initiation ceremony also informed you that fidelity, charity and respect for the secrets imparted to you were a key to your membership of the Masonic family. Just as you would have learned that the standards and values of your own family as you progressed through your childhood.

The Passing to the Second Degree, we were informed about those great Masons who worked on the building of King Solomon's Temple.

The 2nd Degree ceremony reinforces the idea of taking charge of our own moral development, sharing your thoughts, ideas, and values with others. To become a better man, a better mason, and a better citizen.

Finally, when we are all Raised to the Sublime Degree of a Master Mason (the 3rd Degree) you are told that "once you had passed through the intricate windings of your mortal life, nature would instruct you, by contemplation, how to die". Working to improve one's-self and use the time that is left to you in your mortal life to make a significant and positive difference to the world you live in!

The three Craft Degrees have a wonderful perspective of your passage through your **physical life on Earth**.

In Royal Arch Masonry it develops that story by encouraging you to focus on your relationship with God – it states in its ritual; *"In the degrees which you received in the Craft you were taught that*

*Freemasonry is a system of morality based on a belief in The Great Architect of the Universe and prompting brotherly love, relief and truth as a rule for your earthly pilgrimage it urges you to lift your eyes to Him Whose Divine Word brings peace and salvation to the faithful and obedient of the human race. 'The Royal Arch develops this theme. It is therefore concerned with truth in the light of eternity and so leads its **Companions** to a higher understanding of the purpose of their mortal existence.'*

It gives us the chance to explore our spiritual side and what that means to us as individuals. To put it simply it contributes to no short measure **"To the knowledge of yourself."**

This can only be achieved because of the indissoluble link between the 3 Craft Degrees of Pure Ancient Freemasonry and its conclusion in the Holy Royal Arch.

The 3rd Degree tracing board, whilst we cannot look at it now, represents a point in time, approximately 1000BC. At this time the Ark of the Covenant had already been in existence for nearly 500 years and had been entrusted into the safe keeping of the 12 tribes of Israel. Approximately 400 years after events depicted on the tracing board – King Solomon's Temple was no more, King Solomon has died, the 12 tribes of Israel had been dispersed, 2 of the tribes taken into captivity to Babylon, the Ark of the Covenant is lost and the genuine secrets of the Master Mason remained hidden.

And then in 538BC the 2 tribes that had been taken into captivity are released. They are allowed to return to Jerusalem and encouraged to rebuild King Solomon's Temple. The Royal Arch exaltation ceremony concerns itself with these events and the discoveries that are made during the temple's reconstruction.

A new **'Exalte'** will witness and be involved in a ceremony which differs from any of those contained in the 3 Craft Degrees. The narrative of the ceremony is based on real historical events and helps to explain the true meaning, context, and implications of **"Pure Ancient Freemasonry"** which culminates with **The Order of the Holy Royal Arch**. By choosing to become a Royal Arch Mason and completing your journey in "Pure Ancient Freemasonry," as a newly exalted Companion, you will have encountered a new and different masonic experience. As any Royal Arch Companion will tell you, the visual impact of a Chapter room, coupled with a well delivered ceremony, will have a significant and long-lasting impact on you for the rest of your masonic life.

So Brethren, I hope you can see that the Royal Arch is without doubt the most natural and significant next step that any Master Mason should consider taking, leading as it does to the completion of your journey thus far in **"Pure, Ancient Freemasonry."**

Royal Arch Membership Presentation – Part 2

Brethren,

Welcome to the 2nd part of our presentation which I hope will be able to explain everything we are able to tell you about the Supreme Order of the Holy Royal Arch. Or as it is more popularly known "Chapter," this part, like the 1st part has been adapted to cater for all Masons.

Members of the Order are known as **Companions** and **Excellent Companions** in their Chapters, like Brother and Worshipful Brother in your Craft Lodges. It is also historically considered that the term "Companion" is someone with an even closer bond, more than a Brother.

The Holy Royal Arch is the Order that completes your journey in "**Pure Ancient Freemasonry.**" Some of you I'm sure will have heard many times the preamble from the Book of Constitutions that *"Pure Ancient Freemasonry consists of three degrees and no more, those of the Entered Apprentice, the Fellowcraft, and the Master Mason including the Supreme Order of the Holy Royal Arch".*

Where did the Royal originate from?

As with Craft Freemasonry, there is some debate as to the origins of the Royal Arch, not helped by the lack of surviving evidence. But from some little evidence that does still exist, we do know that the Royal Arch was practiced in London, York, and Dublin by the late 1730's. Some Lodge Minute Books of the 1750's we know that the Royal Arch was being worked within Craft Lodges under the Grand Lodges of Ireland and Scotland.

The Ancients fully accepted the Royal Arch as a part of the Craft Masonry and practiced it as a **fourth degree** albeit at the time only Past Masters of the Lodge were eligible to receive it (remember this was a period in history between 1750-1810 roughly). In fact, the

Supreme Grand Chapter Certificate depicts the Royal Arch temple as a Craft temple with black and white square pavement, implying that the Royal Arch degree was in fact carried out in a craft temple.

The Premier Grand Lodge (also known as the Moderns) continued to be far less enthusiastic about it and only acknowledged it as a separate organised society. Ultimately as is well known in 1813 the two Grand Lodges effectively settled their differences and **The United Grand Lodge of England** was formed. This was possibly only after reaching a compromise on the role and purpose of Royal Arch masonry. The compromise was that after the union, the Royal Arch degree would be fully recognised by the United Grand Lodge as having its rightful place in the English Masonic system (to placate the "Ancients") but to become a separate order (to placate the "Moderns") while all Craft Lodge members would be given sanction to join the Royal Arch if suitably qualified.

In 1817, the New United Grand Lodge oversaw the formation of a "Supreme Grand Chapter" of Royal Arch Masons of England." In Supreme Grand Chapter most of the Senior Executive Officers are the same as in the United Grand Lodge of England (UGLE) which is another the defining link between the Craft and the Coat of Arms are the same for both.

Another significant constitutional event occurred in 1823 when Master Masons were permitted to join Chapters without having previously passed through the Chair of a Craft Lodge. (The myth that you must go through the Chair before joining the Royal Arch stems back over 200 years!!!)

In simple practical terms it is fair to say that those of us who are already members of it, acknowledge that its ritual is in essence a sequel to the raising of a Brother to the Third degree. The Order of the Holy Royal Arch continues the journey of the Master Mason and encourages him to contemplate his relationship with his God and to

explore concepts of eternity. It also enables him to pursue the Masonic Legend to the conclusion which were left unanswered at the end of the 3rd Degree which is: - the manner of recovery of the genuine secrets of a Master Mason some 500 years later!

The Order also encompasses the deeper meaning of the tenets of the Craft and a meaningful relationship with our fellow Companions and the Royal Arch is often referred to as the **very essence of Freemasonry**, the Foundation, the key stone, the indissoluble link with the Craft, such is the significance of the Royal Arch.

Many other Companion Orders exist in England, although not governed under the jurisdiction of the United Grand Lodge of England / Supreme Grand Chapter. However, many of these Orders require membership of the Royal Arch FIRST as an entry qualification for membership. Sadly, some Master Masons never join and consequently miss a vital and enjoyable part of their Masonic life and education. Our Grand Master and Provincial Grand Master both have recently stated that **"ALL Master Masons should consider joining the Royal Arch when the time is right for them, and it should be always considered ahead of joining any other order."**

As a Master Mason you can join a Royal Arch Chapter after only four weeks from your being Raised to the 3rd Degree. It is both a natural and traditional next step in Freemasonry.

So when should I join?

It is not possible to give a definitive answer to that question, as the decision will depend on many personal factors. The essential requirement is that you feel ready and able to take on and enjoy your next and very important step, in my opinion, **it should never be considered as an if I join, but more a when you should become a Royal Arch Mason.** Ideally ALL Master Masons should have taken this key step at least by the time they have been appointed as a Deacon in their Craft Lodge. The only exception might be where you are a

member of an exceptionally large lodge and there is years to wait even to become say Inn Guard and so you may wish to join much sooner. The hunger for knowledge and personal progression in Freemasonry can vary from one Mason to another and so it is something you should discuss with you Mentor / Royal Arch representative and even your family before you commit.

Usually, a Royal Arch Chapter is attached to a specific Lodge and in the main, adopts its name and number, but not all Lodges have a Chapter. It therefore follows that many Companions of a Chapter will come from different Lodges, and sometimes from different Provinces.

In Sussex we have just over two lodges for every Chapter, in total we have 70 Chapters across the Province. I can advise you that these vary in size and similar to the craft, we have Past Masters Chapters, known as Past 1st Principles Chapters, there are 4 of these and a recently formed (in 2018) Sussex Provincial Grand Stewards Chapter – something to aspire to. There is also a fine dining Chapter, called Viking Chapter, which meets in Eastbourne. These are not Chapters you can be exalted into but ones to consider further into your Masonic career.

There is no rush, your journey into the World of Freemasonry should last a lifetime and it was said during the Charge after your initiation, that it is important to make a daily advancement in your masonic knowledge, this also applies when considering not just joining but also your advancement through the offices once in the Royal Arch.

Taking this important next stage after you have been made a Master Mason should be considered by all, it doesn't matter equally if you are a Past Master or even a Provincial Officer, it is never too late to join the Royal Arch.

Chapters meet less frequently than Lodges, typically three or four times a year. Also both joining fees and annual dues are usually less than those in Craft, typical annual fees are around £50 per annum and £10 joining fees, there are generally less instruction evenings and limited General Purpose Committee meetings so the additional time and financial commitments are considerably less than your Craft Lodge.

How is the Royal Arch organised in Sussex?

Our Provincial Grand Master heads the Order and carries the title of "Most Excellent Superintendent", he has a deputy and a 2nd and 3rd Provincial Grand Principles, together with a full compliment of Active Provincial Officers, Secretary, known as Scribe Ezra, Director of Ceremonies, Treasurer, Membership Officer, Mentor etc., and the Team visit Chapters all around the Province for varying reasons and Installation meetings etc. as per the Craft. So, you are, most likely, only aware of only half of the Provincial set up if you are not a member of the Royal Arch.

What are the Royal Arch Ceremonies?

The annual Installation ceremony, which has 3 separate installation ceremonies, one for each of the Principles and there is a ceremony of "Exaltation" of a new Companion into the Order. (Following on from the darkness of the 3rd Degree), this is a colourful, enlightening, and truly memorable ceremony that has a profound and challenging allegorical significance. The story told, which contains some of the most delightful line of Masonic ritual, concerning the rebuilding of the Temple after the return from exile of the Israelites.

What Regalia do you wear?

In Chapter meetings an Apron and a Sash together with a Jewel of the Order, all are worn by the Companions. This Jewel should also be worn in Lodge with Craft regalia to show that the Brother is also a Companion of the Order and as a visible sign of the indissoluble link between the Royal Arch and Craft Masonry. The Ribbons alter in

colour depending on rank; White is for all Companions, Red is for Excellent Companions and the Red and Blue striped ribboned Jewels are for Provincial Officers.

Some differences between the Craft and the Royal Arch:

Lodge (Craftsmen)	Chapters (Ruling Council)
Meetings	Convocations
Brethren	Companions
Master	3 Principles
Apron	Apron, Sash, and Jewel
Practical/Moral	Spiritual/Philosophical
Relationship with man	Relationship with God
Set up the Temple	Very different & Colourful Robes
Festive Board is also quite different.	

So, what happens next?

Every Lodge within the Province has a Royal Arch Representative (or should have!!) and his details should be named on the summons. There will also be many Brethren in your Lodges who are also Companions and who will be identified by their Royal Arch breast jewel as these should always be worn at Craft meetings, I'm sure they will be keen and able to give you advice about joining the Royal Arch and will help make necessary introductions etc. However, your Royal Arch Representative should be the first person to speak with about the Royal Arch, at the end of or soon after your Raising ceremony and I'm sure he will assist you with any questions you may have and discuss with you which is the best Chapter for you to join.

In summary.

In the Royal Arch, you will expand your knowledge and understanding of Freemasonry, you will expand your friendship group and you will continue your career in another Order outside of your Mother Lodge and as a result you will ultimately enjoy Freemasonry more and remain an active and we hope happy Mason.

Finally.

On a personal note, I regret not joining until after I had been through the Worshipful Master's Chair, such was the advice given to me and it was wrong, because I was very keen and ambitious and felt I had lost years of understanding and progression by delaying it, for me it is the most enjoyable and enlightening of the ceremonies I have personally done, and like the Craft ceremonies, it is a team effort and therefore to assist in the ceremony and to watch the ceremony is equally enjoyable.

Any Questions?