



Royal Arch Newsletter #11

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Provincial Information and Communication Officer

Virtual Provincial Convocation

On 26th May, fifty Companions of the Province gathered on zoom for an informal and virtual Provincial Convocation. The Most Excellent Grand Superintendent, E Comp John Reid addressed the Companions:

“The month of May has once again come around and disappointingly this will be the second Annual Provincial Convocation where we have been unable to come together and celebrate the Royal Arch in Wiltshire along with our many distinguished guests and friends from other Provinces.

Companions, we are all aware of the difficult, frustrating, and for many distressing times the Covid Pandemic has had on our lives. As the Government restrictions are gradually being lifted, I believe, or should I say I hope, we have now nearly reached the turning point where our lives may slowly be returning to some form of normality.

It is pleasing to report that even through these difficult times the Province, through the generosity of the Chapters, was able to support a number of charities across Wiltshire. Donations were made to a number of Foodbanks, Victim Support Wiltshire, and Serve On a rescue organisation which needed to purchase important rescue equipment for the training and development of young adults. We continued our Children at Christmas initiative delivering a play tunnel to the Devizes Opportunity Centre an independent charity working with children with special needs up to the age of 4.

As this month should have been our Annual Convocation I can only, once again, convey my congratulations to all the active Provincial Officers who have been patiently waiting to enjoy the experience of supporting the Province. I encourage you to fully embrace the year of your appointment by supporting the Provincial Executive whenever you can, only then will you fully appreciate and enjoy the honour you have received. As ambassadors of the Royal Arch there is an expectation that you will continue to support and encourage the newer members to take part in our ceremonies whilst guiding them to, and through the Principals Chairs, not forgetting wherever possible to promote the Royal Arch within your Craft Lodges.

So, Companions where do we go from here?

Although we have been unable to attend our Chapters, I am well aware that many have held Zoom meetings and I’ve been heartened to see the passion and commitment being shown towards the Royal Arch when I’ve attended these meetings, unfortunately not all Companions have used or been able to access the Internet, so it is vitally important that we now reconnect with all our members, to consider and plan how we take our Chapters forward.

Getting more members involved sharing the ritual has always proved beneficial in bringing us closer in our relationship and the feeling of belonging as Companions. As we return there is bound to be some rustiness in us all, but I would like to think we will have all spent a little time brushing up on ritual, after all its the hard work we put into our preparation which leads to the most enjoyable and memorable evenings.

We have heard from the Provincial Registrar and I’m sure it comes as no surprise that our membership, sadly, has declined for the first time in the last 4 - 5 years, the root cause being the suspension of Freemasonry and with the inability to Exalt or welcome Joining members. We do know that there are a good number of Candidates who have already committed to and are eagerly waiting to join the Royal Arch in Wiltshire once Exaltation Ceremonies can re-commence, so there will be much work to do as we welcome Brethren into our Chapters, but we must ensure their expectations are met by well-structured meetings which will leave a lasting and favourable impression on our Candidates.

Should there be no Candidate the Convocation should have added value with the inclusion of interesting, informative, and well-prepared lectures or discussions, Solomon being an excellent source of material from where to start. Please do not forget the Province is always ready and willing to assist when required and given sufficient advance notice.

Yes, we have our Royal Arch Representatives in our Craft Lodges, but they alone must not, and cannot, be expected to be our only source of promoting or recruiting procedures for the Royal Arch.

It transpired at a recent Zoom meeting, held specifically for potential Exaltees, that a number of those attending made the choice to join the Royal Arch based on conversations with members who they respect and trust, so there is clear evidence that through our enthusiasm, actions, and conversations within our Lodges we can all be successful in attracting new members. We know in Wiltshire we have 32% of Craft members in the Royal Arch so there is considerable scope to increase our membership to much nearer the national average of 42%.

To all the active Provincial Officers I know you are totally committed to the Royal Arch and are greatly respected within your Craft Lodges so during your term of office I challenge each and every one of you to propose one new Candidate into our Order in the period to May 2022. We all need to embrace change if we are to take our Chapters and the Province forward. Now is the ideal time to relaunch ourselves to a wider audience amongst our Craft Brethren.

We now have an excellent interactive presentation entitled an "Introduction to the Royal Arch" aimed at Craft Members who wish to discover more about our Order, unfortunately the original presentation was put on hold due to the Pandemic, so now is the ideal time to re-launch this presentation.

I am sure Companions you would all wish to join me in congratulating Excellent Companions Vince Delderfield, Larry Baldry and Mark Fuller on their appointment in Grand Chapter to Past Grand Standard Bearers and I couple this with Excellent Companion Philip Bullock our Provincial Grand Master who was promoted to Past Deputy Grand Sword Bearer and the Reverend Doctor John Railton re-appointed as Grand Scribe Nehemiah. There must be times, Companions, when you think what is the Supreme Grand Chapter doing to promote the Royal Arch and how is it taking the Order forward?

I can inform you that the UGLE website is currently being updated to include the Royal Arch rather than having the two separate websites. Freemasonry Today is going to include more Royal Arch coverage, as will the First Rising.

Two major initiatives have just been announced by the President of the Committee of General Purposes for the Royal Arch, where he has set up a Working Party and a Liaison Group.

The Membership and Communications Working Party have a fact-finding remit in the first instance to gather data to establish how the Royal Arch is explained and portrayed, as well as looking at the membership statistics, how strategies, policies, and initiatives are used around the country.

The Royal Arch Liaison Group will strengthen the role of the Royal Arch within the Regional Communication Groups by interfacing with the Committee of General Purposes and Supreme Grand Chapter. Companions the Royal Arch IS moving forward.

I can assure you there are no changes to the ritual being considered.

Companions, our Province continues to run smoothly due to the tireless work undertaken behind the scenes by the Provincial Executive, much of it un-noticed, but I know it is appreciated by us all.

Finally Companions I thank every one of you for your support and as always look forward to meeting with you when safe to do so, in the knowledge once again that the Holy Royal Arch in Wiltshire is a most appealing Order in which to belong. I thank you all for your Companionship and trust the TTALGMH will keep you safe and be with you all."

Welcome Back Companions



Gooch Chapter No. 1295

Gooch Chapter No. 1295 met under the 'rule of six' on 20th May 2021 for the first time since January 2020 - as you can imagine there was a lot of outstanding business, but a successful meeting saw the Chapter catch up.

What a start for the new Scribe E, E Comp. Andy Entwistle!!

Chapter of Harmony No 663

Chapter of Harmony has held their first Convocation since Friday 13th March 2020 at the Masonic Hall, Devizes.

Held under the Rule of 6 the attendees managed to complete outstanding business held over since last year, the existing Principals and Officers were proclaimed to continue in office until November 2021, the new Principals for 2021/22 were elected, accounts were passed and more importantly E Comp G H Grant, PPrGScrN was elected an Honorary Member of the Chapter.

Officers Attending were:

Back Row L to R – E Comp R Bullen, PPrGStB, (Acting Scribe N), E Comp W (Bill) Hicks, PPrGStB (Scribe E), E Comp M Lovell, **PGStB**, 3rdPrin (DC).

Front Row L to R – E Comp P Martin, PPrGStB, (Haggai), E Comp A Watts, 1st AsstSoj, (Acting MEZ), E Comp P Austin (Joshua).

Words – E Comp Bill Hicks





Chapter of Friendship and Unity No 1271

At the Installation meeting of the Chapter of Friendship and Unity No 1271 in Bradford on Avon last evening, the 19th May, six intrepid Companions braved the risks and restrictions to install E Comp Peter Davies into the First Principal's Chair, accompanied by E Comp Paul Brown as Haggai and E Comp Fritz Easthope as Joshua. The ceremony was adapted as close to the full and proper ritual as possible by the Director of Ceremonies, E Comp John Tufton.

Copies of the adapted ritual are available for a small charge. E Comp Alan Bancroft acted as Janitor and ensured all rules and regulations were complied with. The new IPZ, E Comp Mark Griffiths, after three years was very pleased to be relieved of the responsibility of MEZ, to oversee the ceremony. The Chapter Officers were invested in absentia and will be installed at the next full meeting of the Chapter in November.

It was a strange, nostalgic feeling after so long a gap and with the Chapter so empty, but in some ways, it was closer, more personal and intimate. It heralded the hope for the future and the fraternity opening its doors wider again.

Fraternal greetings and best wishes to all
Peter Davies





Highworth Chapter No. 9009

On Friday 04th June it was the Installation Convocation at Highworth Chapter No. 9009.

E Comp Richard Legge was installed as MEZ and E Comp David Plotkin was installed as H.

Due to COVID the numbers were limited but the Chapter was pleased to see the Most Excellent Grand Superintendent E Comp John Reid and the 3rd Provincial Grand Principal, E Comp, Mark Lovell in attendance along with E Comp Andrew Tiffin the Provincial Charity Steward.

Even though there was no dining after the meeting it was great to be back in the Chapter again after so long.

St Edmund Chapter No. 4714

On Thursday 03rd June six members of St Edmund Chapter No. 4714 met at Calne Masonic Hall. It was the first meeting of the Chapter since September 2020!

As can be imagined there was a lot of admin to catch up on. However, despite not meeting for a while the Chapter has four Brethren waiting for Exaltation and a joining member was proposed.

Once the formal meeting was over the Companions retired in casual order for a meal at The Gurkha Bayjan



Got 30 minutes to spare?
Why not catch up with a
Companion?

Give them a ring or meet
for a coffee



ADVANCE NOTICE Provincial Church Service

Circumstances permitting the annual Church Service will be held in Calne under the banner of the Provincial Grand Chapter of Wiltshire on 24th October 2021.

More details will be circulated, but please mark the day in your diary and make every effort to support your Province and the Most Excellent Grand Superintendent.



HOW TO SUPPORT YOUR CHAPTER

- Attend as many meetings & rehearsals as you can
 - Support & participate
- Be prepared; make an effort to learn and perform some ritual
- Volunteer rather than waiting to be asked
- Speak to as many Companions as possible
- Be proactive and speak about the Royal Arch to your Craft Brethren. If they show interest, invite them to join
- If you cannot take office, think about how else you can contribute
 - Pay your subscription on time
 - Respond to the summons



Chapter of Harmony No. 663

On Tuesday 15th June, members of the Chapter of Harmony No. 663 took the opportunity to present a sandpit to the Devizes & District Opportunity Centre. The centre opens a world of opportunities for children with special needs and their families through high quality Early Years Education, therapeutic care and ongoing support. Working closely with families they offer a comprehensive assessment of need and devise an ongoing developmental program of specialist early intervention, specific teaching strategies, stimulating play activities and fun in order to maximise learning experiences and help each child reach their potential.

Following an appeal from Comp David King whose twin grandsons, suffer from cerebral palsy, and attended the centre until they moved onto full-time schooling, the Chapter decided to support such a worthy cause.

E Comp Peter Martin (H), E Comp John Davies (MEZ), E Comp Philip Austin (J) and Comp David King visited the staff and children to hand over the sandpit (and have a play). They were made most welcome and were shown the amazing facilities the centre offers. The staff expressed their grateful thanks for the support.

To find out more about the centre visit - <http://www.devizesopportunitycentre.co.uk/>





Wiltshire Chapter of First Principals No. 6731

On Tuesday 22nd June, the Wiltshire Chapter of First Principals met in Chippenham. It was hoped that the date would allow a maximum attendance as it was planned to happen after the planned easing of restrictions. However that was not to be the case and a smaller meeting was organised to comply with the mitigations in the risk assessment for the use of Chippenham Masonic Hall.

Despite some last-minute re-arrangements twenty Companions met and completed several pieces of outstanding administration and then retired to dine together and enjoy each other's company.



**THE FEELING
YOU GET
WHEN YOU JOIN
THE ROYAL
ARCH!**

