

DISTRICT GRAND CHAPTER OF SOUTH AFRICA, NORTH

Of Royal Arch Masons of England



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GRAND SUPERINTENDENT'S ADDRESS ANNUAL CONVOCATION – 6 OCTOBER 2012

Welcome to you all to this 110TH Annual Convocation of District Grand Chapter, and in particular, to those who have travelled long distances to be with us. I extend a warm welcome to our distinguished guests and trust they have enjoyed our proceedings.

I acknowledge the presence of E.Comp Gerald Fotinakis, Past Grand Superintendent and thank him for his attendance. I congratulate those Companions who have received District Grand Rank today, and I know you will also join me in congratulating the following who received Grand Rank earlier this year: E. Companions John Fleming, Richard Harris and David Whitfield received first appointments to PGStB and E. Comp George Boyd to PAGDC. E. Comp. Cleve Wiehahn was promoted to PGSwdB and E. Comp Graham Bendell was promoted to PAGSoj.

I congratulate E Comp David Pickard on his promotion to District Grand Scribe Ezra and I look forward to working with him.

On this occasion, I would like to pay tribute to E Comp Stanley Elms who has retired as District Grand Scribe Ezra. We thank him most sincerely for his service over the past seven years. I thank him for what he has done for the District and I wish him well in his retirement.

I would also like to acknowledge E Comp Tim Smith who has stood-down as District Grand Director of Ceremonies. Tim has set a high standard which will be extremely difficult to emulate. I thank him for what he has done for the District, in particular during the last five years of service as Director of Ceremonies.

Companions, earlier this year, E Comp Ted Ablett passed away. Ted served as ME Grand Superintendent for seven years, between 1978 and 1985. E Comps. Travers Penrose, PAGSoj and Koen Roorda, PAGSoj, both senior Companions in the District also passed away. Both had served the District with distinction as President of the District Committee of General Purposes. It is with great sadness that I also have to announce that E Comp Des Davies-Hannibal passed away recently whilst serving in office as Dist Grand Scribe Nehemiah.

On Wednesday 16 October 2013, Supreme Grand Chapter will be celebrating its Bi-Centenary. There is no actual date for the origin of the Royal Arch, but Supreme Grand Chapter has taken the date of Union between the two Grand Lodges in 1813 as the date for the basis of the Bi-Centenary.

The Pro First Grand Principal and the other High Rulers in Supreme Grand Chapter are working towards the Bi-Centenary to ensure the long-term future of the Royal Arch. A strategic working party under the chairmanship of the Second Grand Principal has brought forward several

recommendations to promote the Royal Arch. These recommendations will be brought to the attention of Chapters. However, I would like to emphasise here the first recommendation from the working committee to adopt the strap line “from Initiation to Exaltation” to promote the Order.

Companions, there still seems to be some confusion in understanding the relationship between the Craft and the Holy Royal Arch. As you are probably all aware, in our Constitution, the Primary Declaration of 1813, in the Book of Constitutions, states:

“Pure Ancient Masonry consists of three degrees and no more, i.e. those of the Entered Apprentice, the Fellow Craft and the Master Mason, including the Supreme Order of the Holy Royal Arch”.

Following a strategic review of the Holy Royal Arch during 2007, it was recommended that a clearer emphasis was needed to establish beyond doubt the inseparable bond between the Craft and the Royal Arch. A re-positioning statement was approved to support the earlier Preliminary Declaration to read:

“The Order of the Holy Royal Arch is an integral part of Pure Ancient Masonry, being the completion of Craft Masonry, and the essential next step in Freemasonry for all Master Masons.”

For many years the Royal Arch was described as the completion of the Third Degree which as the Grand Master stated in April 2004, implies that “neither the Third Degree nor the ceremony of Exaltation is complete, which is surely untrue”. However, he further made the point that “a man can only become a complete Mason when he takes the very important step into the Royal Arch”.

So the Royal Arch provides the last part of the journey through which Pure Antient Masonry is completed. It should not be considered an optional extra, but the means by which a Master Mason completes his basic Masonic knowledge and experience.

You might compare this to a 4-Act play and without that fourth and final act, i.e. the Royal Arch, the Master Mason is incomplete. This is English Freemasonry. This is our Constitution. Other Constitutions of course have a different history and a different approach and stance.

Companions, this Royal Arch District is in excellent shape. Membership has again increased for the second successive year, this year by 2½ %. Importantly, some 70% of our membership is under the age of 65, which augers well for our future.

However, I find it unacceptable that only 30% of our Craft membership are members of the Royal Arch. I would like to set a challenge to all of us that we try and increase this figure to 50% in the next two years. Importantly, not only do we need to ensure that our Craft brethren complete their Masonic journey, but that we make sure that the Royal Arch is appealing, inspiring and relevant and we successfully retain membership.

Companions recognising that in our Constitution, the Royal Arch is the completion of regular Freemasonry, I have decided that I will only make first appointments to Active or Past District Rank in the Craft to those Brethren who have completed their Craft Masonry by holding the Royal Arch. There will be exceptions to this, where some Craft Brethren do not have access to a Royal

Arch Chapter, but that is rare. The requirement of being a Royal Arch Mason for Craft rank has already been put in place in certain Provinces in England. I will be announcing this requirement later at the Craft Meeting.

Companions, the new ritual book with a clear layout, using the permissive alternate version is proving a great success and is very popular with the Companions. I do thank E Comp David Whitfield for its production. Companions it is available from the District Office at R50.

Last year, I announced the intention to form two new Chapters: one attached to our Lodge of Friendship in Mauritius and the second attached to Fidelity Lodge in Volkrust. Progress is ongoing, but I can tell you that the petition to form the Chapter of Friendship is well-advanced and will be taken to the next Convocation of Supreme Grand Chapter, in November.

I have also set in motion the formation of a Past First Principals' Chapter to be based at Park Lane, Johannesburg. I am delighted to announce that my Deputy, E Comp Cleve Wiehahn will be the Founder First Principal and E Comps Brian McDermott and Hans van Gaalen, the District Grand Second and Third Principals will be the Founder Second and Third Principals, respectively. Some 40 Past First Principals have indicated their intention to become Founders and the petition to form this Chapter will be submitted shortly to Supreme Grand Chapter.

Companions as you are well aware, there is a minimum wait of about five years before a Past First Principal is promoted to District rank. I am mindful that those Past First Principals who are keen to continue to involve themselves in the Royal Arch will be able to give some four/five years of service to the District through this Chapter. This Chapter, like the District Grand Stewards' Lodge, will act as a service Chapter for the District. The aim is that the Chapter will be able to conduct demonstration workings, help to role-out a walk-through explanation of the exaltation ceremony to Chapters, and will be able to assist Chapters at regular and Installation meetings. Recently, I received a copy of a ritual of the ceremony of passing the veils from Grand Scribe Ezra. With the exception of the Bristol working, the passing of the veils is no longer practised in Chapters in our Constitution. However, this ritual has been re-constituted and can be demonstrated on special occasions. I am hopeful that the demonstrations will be carried out by this Chapter.

Companions, to-day we entered District Grand Chapter with a new sword which has been kindly donated by E Comp Roger Webster at the recent Regional Mentors Conference and the scabbard was expertly crafted and donated by E Comp Eugene Bernhardt. My grateful thanks are extended to both these Companions for their generosity.

In conclusion Companions, I would like to thank the District Grand Directors of Ceremonies, E Comps Steve Cousens and Tim Smith and their team for an excellent Ceremony today. In addition, sincere thanks are extended to the outgoing District Grand Scribe Ezra, E Comp Stanley Elms, together with Mrs Fern Rowles and the administrative staff at Park Lane. I look forward to seeing you all at the Craft meeting later this afternoon.

E Comp Prof E Guy Charlesworth
Grand Superintendent
Johannesburg, 6 October 2012