



PROVINCIAL GRAND CHAPTER OF BERKSHIRE

Ian RG Hopgood
Most Excellent Grand Superintendent

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ME Grand Superintendents' Address

Companions, I am really delighted to be able to give this address to Provincial Grand Chapter once again after a prolonged period of uncertainty. The fact that this meeting is actually taking place is evidence that the rays of meridian splendour are before us to disperse those clouds and I am excited to embrace the shoots of progress.

I have no doubt the long suspension of our formal gatherings has made a significant impact on your lives and perhaps like me, your enthusiasm for Freemasonry has diminished during that time and maybe even ground close to a halt. Not stopped I hasten to add – because you are all here today! Companions, doesn't it feel great to be back here in this fabulous temple! And so, satisfying to see our fellow Companions again – in 3 Dimensions!

I had not realised just how much I have missed seeing you and sharing with you our beautiful ritual and some social time together. Today has re-invigorated my enthusiasm for Freemasonry as I am reminded of the full enjoyment, we all derive from our meetings and I'm sure being here today you must feel the same.

Companions, it has given me great pleasure today to finally install my newly appointed Second and Third Provincial Grand Principals

- As Second Provincial Grand Principal, Excellent Comp Philip Howells who has already established himself in this Province through his role as ProvGDC. Phil brings a huge appetite for success and making a real difference in the Province. He will be a key catalyst for our growth and prosperity.
- As Third Provincial Grand Principal, Excellent Comp Colin Townsend Green is likewise well-known within the Province, particularly in the north. Colin brings an immense energy to the Executive and a passion for making the Royal Arch ritual fun and enjoyable. He will also be an invaluable resource to have on this Executive.
- I am also delighted that Excellent Comp Jem Whitmore continues his appointment as Deputy Grand Superintendent. Jem has been a solid Deputy and reliable counsel in my times of need. His affection for the Royal Arch and his enthusiasm and demeanour have earned him a tremendous following from the Berkshire Companions. Thank you.



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I have likewise been very fortunate this day to invest and promote Provincial Officers for both 2020 and 2021 and I extend my hearty congratulations to each and every one of you. These honours verify OUR recognition of the individual dedication and effort you have contributed, not just in your own chapters but across the Province as a whole. We trust, this recognition of your experience and seniority will encourage your continued support and active promotion of the Royal Arch within your circles of Craft Masonry. I charge you to help your fellow Brethren to realise their Pure Antient Freemasonry is not yet complete and that a wonderful conclusion, gilded with brightness and colour, awaits them in the Royal Arch.

I welcome our newly Exalted Companions on this, your first visit to Provincial Grand Chapter! I trust the splendour and ceremonial of today's convocation is sufficient to stimulate your enthusiasm for this order and we look forward to the day you are up here receiving your very own Provincial honours.

Companions, we cannot deny that the Royal Arch has suffered a greater impact from the pandemic because the key component of our convocations, the practice of our beautiful and meaningful Exaltation ceremony, was prohibited. As a result, there have been very few convocations held over the past 18 months. The Provincial Grand Scribe Ezra's report quantifies the extent of the impact by the reduction in our membership across all but 5 chapters – and I congratulate those Chapters who have been able to maintain and even increase their memberships!

Like any natural disasters, there will always be a vacuum ahead of a steady recovery and renewed growth. We must reflect on this pandemic and entwine the useful lessons into our plans for progression and this Executive will stand shoulder to shoulder with you Companions and your Chapters to stimulate growth and build strength in this Province. We remain committed to our strategic approach in guiding this Province with our primary goal of making Royal Arch Masonry SO enjoyable that every Master Mason will be queuing at the door to join.

Paramount to this strategy is a focus on Leadership, Performance and Membership Channels which we must be approached with a positive attitude.

- Strong Leadership is a core component for the success of every Chapter and as Grand Superintendent, I will be looking to the Most Excellent Zerubbabel, Scribe Ezra and Director of Ceremonies to work together and look deep into their Chapter to see how they can engage a contribution from each member.
- Good Performance forms the basis for overall enjoyment – and like the great west end theatre shows everyone wants to return time after time! My new Third Provincial Grand Principal will be developing new tools and practices to help enhance our



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ceremonies and elevate the levels of enjoyment. Companions, my charge to the Chapters and every individual is to take time to reflect on your Performance and ways in which you can polish your conduct and ritual to deliver the very best ceremony for members and visitors but most especially for the candidate.

- Growing Membership is the foundation of strength and growth for this Province and dedicated channels must be explored confidently. A new programme of digital marketing from our leaders in London starting this year will help with public awareness. But Companions there are more than 400 unattached Royal Arch Masons living in Berkshire who are missing the splendour of our order. Companions, I charge you to find them and invite them to re-try the new Royal Arch. My new Second Provincial Grand Principal is picking up the mantle for Royal Arch Reps and Ambassadors to reinvigorate the programme and pave a structured pathway for all Craft Masons.

Companions, this Province has two memorable events taking place in the very near future which I am hugely proud and excited to promote.

- Firstly, after several hurdles and postponements, we will finally consecrate the Berkshire Chapter of Enlightenment No 9946 here at Sindlesham on Friday 1st October – 2 weeks from today. Not only is this the first Chapter consecration in Berkshire for more than 27 years but this Chapter will be a pioneer for learning and education of Royal Arch Masonry. United with the Berkshire Lodge of Enlightenment we are leading the field in this initiative Companions! I would like to publicly praise the 20 Founder Members, the Founding Principals, (E Comps, Anthony Howlett-Bolton, Ian Clark & Steve Heike) and most of all the Founding Sub-committee for your exceptional efforts in keeping this initiative on track – and I look forward to the celebrations!
- And Secondly, our return to Supreme Grand Chapter and lunch at the newly refurbished Concert Artiste Club on Wednesday 10th November. This is a truly fantastic day out which the Companions of Berkshire have supported in droves and I'm sure this year will be no exception. I am eternally grateful to E. Comp Brian Bicknell who has successfully managed this Sojourn to London for 11 years and will be hanging up his boots after November. I look forward to it already!

Companions before closing this address I must express my grateful thanks to those Companions who shuffled arrangements several times to make this Annual Convocations happen;

- From our Provincial Office – Provincial Grand Scribe Ezra – E. Comp David Arnold, and Provincial Assistant Grand Scribe Ezra – E. Comp Philip Mott, who have toiled with



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restrictions and contingency plans to pull together this Convocation in such an accomplished manner. Congratulations and thank you both.

- To our Provincial Grand DC on his first outing and his team for the excellent ceremonial. E. Comp Steve congratulations and I hope we didn't throw you in too deep with the investiture of two new Principals?
- To our distinguished guests for your flexibility in the date changes and for once again adorning our Convocation – thank you.
- And to E. Comp Lionel Higgins Past Second Grand Principal for eagerly stepping in to assist in as Joshua

But most especially, my hearty thanks to you the Companions of Berkshire for your patience, diligence, support and contribution today towards this amazing Province.

Companions, with a new Executive team in place and renewed enthusiasm, I look forward with great passion and excitement to leading this wonderful Province of Berkshire as your Most Excellent Grand Superintendent for the coming year. Let's enjoy our Royal Arch Masonry and show that Berkshire is the BEST Province in the land! Thank you Companions.

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