



# ***PROVINCIAL GRAND CHAPTER OF BERKSHIRE***

## ***Provincial Grand Chapter***

***9<sup>th</sup> June 2022***



### **ME Grand Superintendents' Address**

Companions, I am absolutely delighted to be here at this Provincial Grand Chapter of Berkshire. It is truly fabulous to share this convocation with so many Companions from Berkshire and especially from our surrounding Provinces.

The risks from the COVID pandemic are clearly subsiding and confidence for a safe return to Freemasonry is growing daily. It is high time for us to dust-off our suits and regalia and re-engage with that wonderful pastime we all love and cherish – especially our Royal Arch Masonry! Thankfully, the pause over the past 2 years has given us a chance to reset our minds and our enthusiasm and the presence of you all here today is ample testimony to that.

Companions, I would like to begin this address with my grateful thanks to those Companions who have worked so diligently over the past 6 months to deliver this Annual Convocation.

- From our Provincial Office – Provincial Grand Scribe Ezra – E.Comp David Arnold, and Provincial Assistant Grand Scribe Ezra – E.Comp Philip Mott, together with our Past Provincial Grand Scribe Ezra, E.Comp Roger Jones. Together you have administered today's proceedings in exemplary fashion. Congratulations on another outstanding success!
- To our Provincial Grand DC E.Comp Steve Hieke and his team of Deputies and Assistances for their excellent management of our ceremonial. Congratulations Steve and well-done team!
- To our galaxy of distinguished guests for once again adorning our Convocation – we are delighted you could join us.
- Very importantly, to our guest organist, E.Comp. Graham Seeman who volunteered at short notice to assist us – Graham thank you!

And not least, to YOU the Companions of Berkshire for supporting your Province and your fellow Companions receiving honours today.

Companions, it is with renewed excitement that I acknowledge the continued appointment of my Deputy Grand Superintendent E.Comp Jem Whitmore and the re-appointment of my Second Provincial Grand Principal E.Comp Philip Howells and Third Provincial Grand Principal E.Comp Colin Townsend Green. Along with the Provincial Grand Scribe Ezra, Treasurer and Director of Ceremonies, this Executive team was assembled to deliver Prosperity to Royal Arch Masonry in Berkshire and now with some freedom from the barriers of the pandemic, I look forward to pursuing that goal. A little more on that later in my address.

I extend my hearty congratulations to all those newly invested and promoted Companions on your well-deserved appointments. These honours reflect OUR recognition of your dedication and contribution both to your individual chapters and the Province as a whole. We hope that your elevated seniority and experience within the Province, will stimulate you to act as a role model for others, to promote the Royal Arch within the circles of your Craft Masonry and ensure EVERY Freemason knows that Exaltation into the Royal Arch is the concluding part of his Pure Antient Freemasonry.

Sadly, a consequence of these new appointments is of course, the retirement of the former officers. In this post-pandemic year, I would like to give a very special thanks to all those acting Provincial Officer

who have served for 2 years. Your enthusiasm, support and participation in the various team events has been outstanding! Your contribution has been a lifeline to many of the Chapters in this Province and Royal Arch Masonry in general – I am hugely grateful and on behalf of this Royal Arch Executive, I thank you!

Since our return to Royal Arch ceremonies, we have witnessed many Exaltations across the Province and I extend a very warm welcome to our newly Exalted Companions on your first visit to Provincial Grand Chapter! I hope the splendour and ceremonial of today's convocation has surpassed your expectations and will stimulate your enthusiasm for this order. You will be delighted to learn that the online database for learning and development, Solomon, has recently launched a collection of new 'Welcome Companion' modules which may whet your appetite further. Companions, it will not be too long before you are up here receiving your own Provincial honours.

Companions, we are constantly reminded of the indissoluble link between the Craft and Royal Arch Masonry and in no Province is this better demonstrated than Berkshire. Our RW-PGM is a highly enthusiastic supporter of the RA on so many levels which was amply recognised with his recent appointment to acting Deputy Grand Sword Bearer at SGC.

At a local level, his avid promotion of the RA in Berkshire is exemplified by his acting roles of First principal in the Berkshire Chapter of Enlightenment and Second Principal in the Berkshire First Principals Chapter.

RW-PGM, I am sincerely grateful and very proud of our close working relationship on Provincial matters and for the constructive and fruitful sessions between our respective Executives. Thank you for your valuable support and promotion of Royal Arch Masonry.

Companions whilst I have the undivided attention of our RWPGM, I would like to make a short presentation. You will recall that I pledged our charitable support to our PGM for the 2023 Festival, and I am mindful that we are approaching the final straight. On behalf of the Chapters and Companions of Berkshire, it gives me great pleasure to present to you a further contribution of £10,000 plus an additional £2500 from the Berkshire Chapters Ladies Supper fund. We look forward with excitement to a successful finale to the festival.

Companions, later this year will see the launch from Freemasons Hall of a new Strategic Roadmap for Freemasonry encompassing both Craft and Royal Arch Masonry. This strategy is currently going through consultation with the various Regional Communications Groups, and I am delighted that the Thames Valley RCG have already contributed its feedback to that roadmap. The new strategy pulls on the strong foundations which already exist in Freemasonry and through dedicated pillars of activity will stimulate a thriving organisation for the future. Companions, it is our challenge and our duty to assist in delivering that thriving organisation within the Province of Berkshire!

My Royal Arch Prosperity Triangle already goes some way to delivering that future goal and I look forward to making small adjustments once the final Strategic Roadmap is released. By focusing our actions on the three core facets of Leadership, Performance and Membership our challenge can be realised.

- [MEZs & Principals] LEADERSHIP as symbolised by the Crown of the First Principals Sceptre – should be the driving force behind our Province and every one of our Chapters. Good practice from across the Province shows that Prosperous Leadership comes from strong commitment from five key officers of the Chapter – the MEZ, the 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Principals, Scribe Ezra and the Director of Ceremonies and I urge you to work closely together to engage with your Chapter and pave the way to a Prosperous future.

- [Officers of Chapter] PERFORMANCE as symbolised by the Mitre of the Third Principals Sceptre – focuses on creating enjoyment. Companions we already have a great story to tell – so let's perform it well – especially for the Candidate! The additional setting the scene ritual already enhances our understanding of the story but there is more we can do! Our 3<sup>rd</sup> Provincial Grand Principal is currently gathering good practice from the Chapters in our Province and our surrounding Provinces for ways of sharing the ritual between the team and adding some theatre to the key roles. The results will be promoted to our chapters with demonstrated by a dedicated team of Companions.
- [Comp] MEMBERSHIP as symbolised by the All-Seeing Eye of the Second Principals Sceptre – concentrates on a continual membership growth plan. A new strategic plan will be launched by our 2<sup>nd</sup> Provincial Grand Principal in the Autumn. With the support and encouragement from our RW-PGM and his Executive we will engage stronger with the RA Reps to provide guidelines and good practice for promoting the Royal Arch. Alongside this, each chapter will be encouraged to appoint a Membership Officer who will act as an ambassador for the Chapter. His role is to work in tandem with the RA Reps and to market his Chapter to associated Lodges.

Such is the importance of Membership, that at the last convocation of Supreme Grand Chapter, a notice of motion was served for a Provincial Membership Officers to be added to the regular list of Royal Arch Provincial officers. Until that time, our 2<sup>nd</sup> Provincial Grand Principal will be assisted by E.Comp Rob Wilkinson to deliver on his strategic plan.

Companions of Berkshire Chapters, I again charge you to engage wholeheartedly in this strategy to help to deliver a thriving Province.

Finally, Companions, just like the rays of meridian splendour which illuminated the sacred vault and its contents, so our Royal Arch future is bright and filled with opportunity for Enlightenment, for Enjoyment and for Reward. Let's step into the vault and explore the treasures that behold!

Thank you, Companions.

*J. R. G. Hopgood*

Most Excellent Grand Superintendent