



PROVINCIAL GRAND CHAPTER OF BERKSHIRE



**Presentation of 50 Year Certificate to
E.Comp. Harry Charles Alfred Benford PGSwdB**

**Presented by E. Comp. Ian Hopgood
ME Grand Superintendent of the Province of Berkshire
At Christopher Wren Chapter No. 4855 - Zoom**

Tuesday 9th February 2021

Most Excellent, Past Grand Superintendents, Excellent Companions and Companions – good evening to you all. It's great to see so many of you this evening and it is my great pleasure to present the next item.

Let me first introduce to you, Excellent Companion Harry Benford and enlighten you to this incredible Mason. Excellent Companion Harry was born in Langley, Buckinghamshire on 13th November 1925 and celebrated his 95th birthday back in November! As the first of six children (5 boys and 1 girl) to Father Harry Snr and Mother Louisa, Harry Jnr was destined for great things and to become a leading light for many.

Harry's professional career took many twists and turns. Having finished Langley Central School, he joined a local garage shortly before it became Douglas Engineering and due to the war effort manufactured parts for aeroplanes – an interest which stayed with him for many years! National service followed with travel to Greece and Egypt with the Royal Tank Regiment – which might be the reason he drives a Mercedes! Upon leaving the army, Harry became attracted to the paper industry AND a burning desire to become his own boss.

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PROVINCIAL GRAND CHAPTER OF BERKSHIRE



It was during this time Harry met his delightful wife Eunice and in 1952 they were married at St Peter's Church, Burham, Bucks – they will celebrate 70 years marriage next year!!

Harry's Brother Ken recounted many great memories of trips he and Colin made with Harry and Eunice to the Farnborough Air Show and Royal Tournament, and further shared that their kindness and generosity were endless, with the doors of their Kennington home always open to friends and family – especially the family Boxing Day bash!

As a married couple Harry and Eunice eventually found a floundering printing business in Abingdon which they subsequently bought as a going concern and with much toil and effort turned it into a successful business before it was sold in the year 2000, so Harry and Eunice could enjoy a well-deserved retirement – many of you from the Abingdon area may well recognise the name Abbey Press.

Excellent Companion Harry, I know I speak for us ALL on this zoom meeting when I say we are absolutely delighted to be with you (albeit virtually) to mark this very auspicious occasion and tremendous 'mile-stone' in your Masonic career.

Companions, let me enlighten you further with some factual and historical details about this very distinguished Freemason;

- Shortly after his 28th birthday, Harry was Initiated into Christopher Wren Lodge No. 4855, in the county of Berkshire on 27-March-1954
- Despite being a widely travelled Craft Mason, Harry concentrated his Lodge memberships to the Province of Berkshire where he became a Founder member of St Swithun's Lodge in Abingdon in 1974. Harry served as Worshipful Master in 2007 followed by 7 years as Organist. Harry was also a joining member of Berkshire Masters Lodge where he also served and Worshipful Master in 2009.

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PROVINCIAL GRAND CHAPTER OF BERKSHIRE



- Back to his Mother lodge, Harry progressed through the offices of Christopher Wren Lodge to become Worshipful Master in 1967 and continued to serve the Lodge as Inner Guard and Junior Deacon since that time. Companions, Harry also had the great honour and I'm sure great pleasure to have initiated two blood Brothers into the Lodge – Colin in 1970 and Ken in 1976!
- Harry received his first Provincial honours from Berkshire in 1979 as PProvGSwdB and was subsequently promoted to ProvJGW in 1983.
- E.Comp Harry was further honoured with Craft Grand Rank in 1988 as PAGDC followed by promotion in 2008 to Past Junior Grand Deacon.
- Harry reached his 50 years anniversary in Craft in March 2004 and next month will have contributed to Berkshire Masonry for 67 years!! (Wow!)

But Companions, we are here tonight to celebrate his outstanding achievement in the Holy Royal Arch. Excellent Companion Harry's highly distinguished Royal Arch career began 50 years ago, when on 6-February-1971, Worshipful Brother Harry (as he was at the time) was exalted into the Christopher Wren Chapter No. 4855 in the Province of Berkshire. You worked through the offices and served as MEZ in 1977 and have continued your valuable support for Christopher Wren since that time. And here Companions, we owe a great deal of thanks to Harry for it was he who Exalted my predecessor and your Past Grand Superintendent E.Comp Ken Benford – thank you on behalf of the Province.

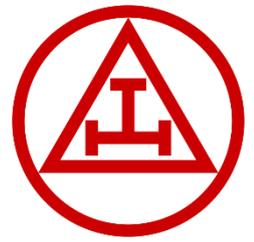
It appears you took a particular shine to the Holy Royal Arch as you spread your interests much further afield than Craft and much higher in rank and attainment.

- Outside of the Province, you became a Founding member of the Chapter of Rectitude No 335 in the Province of Wiltshire in 1997, a joining member of Methuen Chapter in

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PROVINCIAL GRAND CHAPTER OF BERKSHIRE



the Province of Buckinghamshire in 2001 and also a joining member of Cockfosters Chapter in London in 2003 – enjoying acting offices during these memberships.

- In Supreme Grand Chapter, you received your first Grand Rank in 1986 when you were appointed PAGDC. Since then you have received 3 promotions; to PAGSoj in 1994, PGSoj in 1997 and to your current rank of Past Grand Sword Bearer in 2002.

But Companions, it is here in Berkshire that Harry's distinction is most prominent with most of us here this evening. E.Comp Harry contributed enormously to the growth this Province.

- In 1982 you became a Founding member of St Swithun's Chapter No. 8550 and worked through the offices to become MEZ in 2000 and later serving as Treasurer.
- And 12 years later in 1994, you also became the Founding Most Excellent Zerubbabel at the consecration of Wilder Chapter No. 9471 – and we all celebrated their 25th anniversary in 2019.
- It was during this time that your talent and huge enthusiasm for the Holy Royal Arch was warmly recognised when ME Grand Superintendent, Lesley Longbotham, appointed you Third Provincial Grand Principal for Berkshire in 1989 – an office you excelled in for 3 and a half years! So much so, that in 1993 you were promoted to Second Provincial Grand Principal for a further 3 years!
- However, the pinnacle of your Provincial career followed in 1996 when the MEGS Robert Faulkner invested you with your patent of authority as Deputy Grand Superintendent for Berkshire.

Excellent Companion Harry, I am absolutely delighted the Chapter is holding this Zoom meeting tonight so we can all be part of this celebration. I have the greatest respect and admiration for you as a Man and as a Freemason. Your support to Royal Arch Masonry in general, stands as an inspiration to us all. And on behalf of all Royal Arch Masonry in Berkshire, thank you for everything you have done.

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PROVINCIAL GRAND CHAPTER OF BERKSHIRE



As Grand Superintendent for this Province and on behalf of the Past Grand Superintendents, the Provincial Executive (Past & Present), the Companions of Berkshire and the Companions here tonight, it is my absolute privilege to

- Congratulate you on attaining 50 years in Royal Arch Freemasonry
- And to virtually present you with this framed certificate to mark this very auspicious occasion – the framed version will be delivered to you in the next day or two
- We also present you with this attractive lapel pin to advertise and promote your achievement – please wear it with pride!

Companions – Excellent Companion Harry Charles Alfred Benford