

The Royal Arch

In East Lancashire



Robert I Frankl
Most Excellent Grand Superintendent



EComp Paul G Bowen
2nd Provincial Grand Principal



EComp Colin Whitaker
3rd Provincial Grand Principal



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Deputy Grand Superintendent

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Foreword from the Deputy Grand Superintendent

In my previous capacity, as the Second Provincial Grand Principal, I was fortunate to have worked alongside two well-respected Deputy Grand Superintendents of this Province. Paul Rose of blessed memory and Martin Roche, both of whom set high standards in office and I gained a great deal from their wise counsel. They will be difficult acts to follow, but rest assured, I will certainly do my best.



So what of the Royal Arch today?.....the Province of East Lancashire is placed respectably above the national average, in terms of the number of Royal Arch members as a percentage of the Craft membership. We however need to enhance that statistic as we are also behind Provinces of a similar size. We cannot be complacent Companions and whilst I know that I have a very dedicated and committed Royal Arch Cabinet working with me, who are determined to strengthen and grow our Order, we will not be able to achieve that goal without your help, Brethren and Companions.

Start at the very beginning..... Of course, without the Craft the Royal Arch does not exist and so we have to do all we can to support the many initiatives within the Craft, to encourage non Royal Arch Masons to join us. There is however, no better place in which to start our recruitment drive than at the very beginning. Consideration for membership of the Royal Arch has to start at inception, at the initial interview of a prospective Mason. At that stage mention of the Royal Arch should, at the very least, be included as part of the conversation.

If the candidate, from interview and as part of the Pathway, is brought up knowing that the Royal Arch exists, then membership becomes very much a part of the natural progression of things in Masonry and being exalted would follow more naturally.

Promoting and creating awareness..... We should strive to make the Royal Arch a consistent message, through Initiation, Passing, Raising and as often as practically possible within a Craft environment.

Of course, we can all assist in this. Proposers and seconders of a Mason, (hoping of course that they themselves are in the Royal Arch), the Lodge Royal Arch Representative, the Lodge Mentor, the RADO and other members of the Lodge wearing the Royal Arch jewel can all assist with encouraging membership and in addition, the Lodge generally can be more Royal Arch proactive.

We, as Royal Arch Masons, should try to be proactive within the Lodge environment to promote our Order as practically as possible. Let us make sure that the Lodge Royal Arch Representative is the right man for the role and that he is fully supported in his quest. Try to encourage awareness by giving him a platform within the Lodge, by including as an item on the summons, a "Lodge Royal Arch Representative's Report".

Perhaps arrange for it to become a custom in your Lodge, that the Worshipful Master congratulates members of the Lodge that have recently joined the Royal Arch or who are to receive or have received Royal Arch Provincial Honours, or Supreme Grand Chapter Honours. Perhaps, even ask the Worshipful Master to announce the date of the forthcoming meeting of Provincial Grand Chapter and that All Royal Arch companions are eligible to attend.



Craft Lodges are the pool for our recruitment and where better to create more awareness and promote the Royal Arch by introducing it as much as we can and bringing it into focus within that Craft environment.

Let us not forget Companions, that whilst not everyone of us are formally appointed as the Lodge Royal Arch Representative, when it comes to encouraging membership, **we are ALL in fact, Lodge Royal Arch Representatives.**

And remember, once exalted and having worked so hard to introduce new Companions, we then have a responsibility to ensure that time spent in Royal Arch Chapters is both enjoyable and interesting, so that we retain memberships.

New Most Excellent Pro First Grand Principal..... At Supreme Grand Chapter last month, we witnessed the installation of the new Most Excellent Pro First Grand Principal, Jonathan Spence, we of course wish him well and every success in office. Most Excellent Companion Spence has his own unique strategy, it is however rooted to that of the Past Pro First Grand Principal Peter Geoffrey Lowndes in that they both openly promote the 'indissoluble link' that exists between the Craft and the Royal Arch and which strongly encourages Royal Arch membership.

3747..... I would like to take this opportunity of congratulating the newly installed Principals of the East Lancashire Provincial Grand Officers Chapter No. 3747, EComp's Andrew Holland, Sylvester During and Paul Yates. All of whom are excellent supporters of the Chapter and extremely committed members of the Province in both the Craft and the Royal Arch. We congratulate them on their installations and couple that with our appreciation and grateful thanks for their continued service and dedication.

Further, I strongly recommend membership of 3747, to all Royal Arch Provincial Grand Officers.

I also wish to mention a very dear Past 1st Principal and recently departed friend of 3747 Chapter in particular and East Lancashire Masonry generally. EComp Len Hayes PGStB of blessed memory, served this Province with distinction within the District system and as Assistant to the Provincial Grand Principals, where he made numerous and valued contributions. Len was a dear friend to us all and we very much miss his being.

Talking of dear friends, who are totally committed to the Province, they don't come much more committed than EComp Prof Tony Freemont PGStB, Past Assistant to the Provincial Grand Principals. Tony has had a year of ill health that very few could endure. Yet throughout his period of serious ill health, he has continued to show incomparable strength and great fortitude and has diligently continued to serve the Province, even when the odds were stacked against him. I am very grateful for his service and most of all his dear friendship.

The past and present members of the Royal Arch Cabinet wish him a continued recovery and a speedy return to good health.

Whilst Tony has now retired from the Cabinet, I am more than delighted to be working alongside his successor, EComp Dr Mo Afsa ProVGStwd and now Assistant to the Provincial Grand Principals. Whilst Mo's time in the Royal Arch is relatively short I have every confidence in his abilities to

continue to serve this Province, just as he has done in his previous important roles and responsibilities. I know that he will be a valued member of the Royal Arch Cabinet and I wish him well.

I send my best wishes to you all and hope that you continue to enjoy your Royal Arch Masonry in good health.

EComp Harvey Basger PAGSoj - Deputy Grand Superintendent.





Musings from the 3rd Provincial Grand Principal

Thoughts of an old member of an even older Chapter

Let me introduce myself, I'm Colin Whitaker, 3rd Provincial Grand Principal and a Companion of one of the oldest, continuously working Royal Arch Chapters in existence, Cana Chapter No 116.

The chapter is one of three still working in East Lancashire, all of which were warranted in 1769. They are Unanimity, No. 42 in Bury, warranted in November 1769, along with The Chapter of the Nativity, No. 126 and Cana Chapter, both warranted on the 12th May 1769.

I have the dubious honour of being the longest serving PZ in Cana chapter, always a problem when you reach the top of the members list, there's only one further step after that and it doesn't bear thinking about!!

I have to say, Royal Arch Masonry fills me with a great sense of pride, both from being lucky enough to hold a quite special, acting Provincial Rank (who would have thought that, I hear you all say) and also from simply being a member of my very old Chapter. I am sure that the Companions of Nativity and those of Unanimity, feel exactly the same about their respective Chapters.

I've never visited Unanimity, hopefully I will be doing so later this year but I have visited Nativity many times and what is really surprising to me, is that although consecrated/warranted on the same day, presumably, by the same group of people and operating within 5 miles of each other, the differences in the workings are stark.

I can't speak for Nativity but I would suggest that they work in much the same way as most Chapters, including the Provincial Grand Officers Chapter. That's not the case with Cana.

One noticeable and fundamental difference, is that we perambulate the chapter room anti clock-wise. Every other Lodge/Chapter that I've seen, all perambulate clock-wise.

Our Scribe N sits in the South, where a craft JW would sit and the door is guarded on the inside by the 2nd Ass Soj. Talking of sojourners, we pronounce the word "surjurners", and not as most do, "sodjeners". We have quite a different opening and closing ceremony, which has its own little ritual book.

The Chapter has always tried to retain its traditions and landmarks. We have made the changes mandated by Supreme Grand Chapter but where optional, we have retained, what we believe to be the original workings.

I well remember, a few years ago, changes were suggested to shorten the lectures and the readings etc and a good friend of mine, EComp Allan Bennion was involved in the production of a new Provincial Ritual book. As I was then the DC of Cana and he was, I think, 2nd Provincial Grand Principal, or maybe Deputy Grand Superintendent, he presented me with a copy and added words to the effect "I'm giving you this ritual book but I know damn well, you won't follow it" and he was right, we didn't.

That was, in no way being disrespectful to EComp Bennion. We still greet each other warmly and he still speaks to me.

I remarked earlier how proud I am to be a Companion of Cana Chapter and I would add to that, how lucky we are, both the companions of Cana Chapter and indeed East Lancashire Companions generally, to have artifacts from so long ago, still in existence for us all to see.



The Cana robes together with the aprons and crowns, which had been in continuous use since 1783, were, I believe, donated to the Masonic Museum in 1938 and before you ask, - no I wasn't there at the time! They are still on display in Manchester Hall having undergone some extensive conservation work. On display at all our convocations, are the warrant, the centenary warrant and the bicentenary warrant from Supreme Grand Chapter, together with, the jewel in our crown, the Principia. It's believed to be the earliest known copy of Grand Chapter By-laws. All have been professionally restored and conserved.

We also display a very old tracing board. We can't establish its actual age, or who may have designed it but it forms the basis of a most interesting lecture.

Rather than a pedestal, we have an altar with a menorah arched over it, carrying candles lit by taper as part of the opening ceremony. The lighting of the candles, can be the source of some amusement if he who is doing the lighting is of short stature like myself and some mischievous companion has set up the furniture with the newest and tallest candle at the top of the menorah. Quite a struggle.

Companions, what I've written is not meant to be boastful, every Chapter has its own traditions and approaches which are to be valued and maintained, but it's just a reflection, I suppose, of how much I value and enjoy, Royal Arch Masonry.

Each of the three Chapters referred to, have operated for over 250 years. It's a remarkable achievement and their continued existence is something we should all seek to ensure.

EComp Colin Whitaker PGStB. - 3rd Provincial Grand Principal





Ever wondered what the Provincial GDC and his team do?

Who are we? ...

The team consists of the Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies (ProvGDC), two Provincial Deputy Grand Directors of Ceremonies (ProvDepGDC) and a PProvDepGDC. They are all experienced Freemasons, especially in the arena of ritual and ceremony. The team members are:

- The Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies is Andrew Procter who was previously ProvGSteward, ProvAGDC and ProvDepGDC in both the Craft and Royal Arch.
- Jonathan Basger is ProvDepGDC. He was previously a Lodge DC in the Craft, ProvGSteward in both Royal Arch and the Craft, and the ProvAGDC in the Royal Arch.
- Stephen Holcroft is ProvDepGDC. He is active in both East and West Lancashire and has been a ProvGSteward and ProvAGDC. He is also Royal Arch District Officer (RADO) for Bolton and holds the rank of PProvGSwdB in West Lancashire.
- Jim Hilton is the PProvDepGDC on the team. He was previously ProvAGDC and ProvDepGDC in the Royal Arch and now holds the rank of PProvGSwdB.



So, what do we do?...

In short, the members are responsible for the ceremonial side of Provincial celebrations and meetings. They support the senior Royal Arch Officers when they attend the personal 50ths, 60ths and even the occasional 70th anniversary of RA companions' exaltations and "special" anniversaries of Chapter Consecrations, such as Centenaries.

They are responsible for supporting the Most Excellent Grand Superintendent/Deputy Grand Superintendent and Provincial Grand Principals in the consecration of Chapters and dedication of Chapter rooms and most importantly the annual meeting of Provincial Grand Chapter.

The team and officers of the year also support the senior officers of the Province when they attend Chapter installations. The team liaises with the Chapters and rehearse the ceremonial with them to ensure the celebrations run well and most importantly the celebrants and Chapters have an evening to remember.

Covid affected the work of the ProvGDC's team in the same way as all Freemasonry. As a result, the team are now attending an increased number of personal 50th celebrations deferred due to the pandemic.

In March this year, we were honoured to take part in the investiture of our Most Excellent Grand Superintendent by the Assistant Grand Master, and Past 3rd Grand Principal, Sir David Wooton. It was ten years since the previous such event, something the previous ProvGDC had taken part in as Craft Provincial Grand Steward.

Consecrations of Chapters and dedications of Chapter rooms are now rare so the team are pleased that they will be taking part in the dedication of a Chapter Room at Salford in December. Planning is currently under way. If you have not attended one previously it is an elaborate and beautiful ceremony you are recommended to attend.

EComp Andrew Procter, ProvGDC





Everyone is a Mentor

Companions, for those who do not know me, I am the recently appointed Provincial Grand Mentor for the Royal Arch and for those who do, you will be aware that I have also held the office in the Craft for the last four years and my appointment is a further demonstration of the indissoluble connection between the two Orders.

Mentoring is the same whichever Order your involved with, there is nothing magical or mystical about it and this initial message is my attempt to express a few thoughts that you might find useful, of interest and enjoyable.

So, what is Mentoring and why is it so important to the Royal Arch's 3R's – Recruitment (now better known as Attraction which rather spoils the 3R's reference – but we move on), Retention and Retrieval.



The Oxford and other major dictionaries describe a Mentor, as an experienced and trusted adviser (noun) or to advise or train, especially younger colleague (verb).

A mentor imparts information about his or her own career path, provides guidance, motivation, emotional support. A mentor sets goals – develops contacts and identifies resources. Mentoring can be part of a structured process or something more informal.

An effective mentor values his mentee as a person, will develop mutual trust and respect and maintain confidentiality and will listen to what his mentee has to say and how he says it and will help solve rather than give directions, he will focus on his mentees development and not try to build a clone.

How close the dictionary's definitions are to our Masonic view and practice of Mentoring?

When anyone embarks on a new phase in their life, be it starting a new job, living in a different area, or joining Chapter, there is much that is unknown, even to the most experienced Mason. The uncertainties that can arise can lead to feelings of insecurity and even alienation if not addressed early on.

The Royal Arch presents its own unique set of challenges and its uniquely different environment, ceremony, rituals and traditions that we take for granted will seem very strange to the new Companion if not properly explained.

It is therefore vital that from the very outset that one suitably experienced and knowledgeable Companion takes ownership of ensuring that the new exalte is introduced to the order in a controlled and supported way so that his introduction to the Royal Arch becomes an enjoyable and intellectually fulfilling voyage of discovery.

Mentoring, however, is not just about new exaltees. The process of personal development, which is an intrinsic part of the Masonic experience poses continuously changing challenges to a Companion as he advances through his Chapter. Mentoring has a vital role to play in ensuring that every member is supported and encouraged to achieve his own personal goals in a manner which recognises his own personal aptitudes and balances his needs with those of the Chapter, thereby avoiding stress, pressure or feelings of coercion.

Attaining office and passing through the Principals chairs is not, however, the end of the mentoring story as after many years of frontline involvement and being in the thick of things, the recently retired IPZ can be left feeling that he is being cast aside, with no meaningful role to play.



This is where the Chapter Mentor can play an important part in helping a more senior Companion prepare for life after the Chair by encouraging him to acquire the skills and knowledge he will need to succeed in one of the administrative offices such as Scribe E, DC, Treasurer, or even Chapter Mentor.

The bottom line is that the purpose of mentoring is to increase enjoyment and satisfaction through knowledge and thus retain members in the long term. Retention is achieved by ensuring that Companions are encouraged to grow and develop at the speed and in a manner with which they are comfortable, so that they enjoy the Royal Arch to the full.

It is important for the Mentor to get to know and understand the mentee, it is not a one size fits all.

Whilst the natural mentor is the mentees proposer or seconder, there are instances when that might not be appropriate, if either is : –

- not being able to attend the Chapter regularly for valid reasons
 - a new Royal Arch Mason himself
 - an experienced Companion with an office in the Chapter and therefore does not have sufficient time
- in these cases, it would be better to have another suitably qualified Companion to take ownership of the mentor's role, not to subvert the role of the proposer and seconder, but to support their efforts.

Whether you are or have ever been your Chapter mentor or have recently proposed or seconded a new Companion into your Chapter, I hope the above will resonate with you in some way and will provide you with some extra tools in your Royal Arch masonic box.

EComp Jo Glass, ProvGMent



Notable Royal Arch Anniversaries since the 2022 meeting of Provincial



Grand Chapter (NB. Because of the Covid pandemic, a number of very significant anniversary celebrations [50th and 60th] have been delayed. As a consequence there has been a loss of synchronisation between this list of retrospective anniversaries and celebrations. This can be seen when the personal 50th celebrations on the last page and in the APGPs' reports are compared to the anniversaries listed here)

10 YEARS			
Andrew James Davies	Chapter of Meribah	C350	
Ian John Delaney	Cathedral	C7814	
Roger Denton	Red Rose of Lancashire	C9640	
Irwin Gay	Sincerity	C3120	
Marc William Goldsworthy	Chapter of Strength	C286	
Alan Craig Ogden	St John's	C348	
Simon John Rogers	Tudor	C277	
Donald James Smith	Bank Terrace	C462	
Christopher Thompson	Ashlar	C4858	
John Whitehead	Prince Edwin's	C128	
Lawrence John Yarwood	Social	C62	
John Albert Yates	Kitchener	C3788	
20 YEARS			
Robert Derek Calrow	Social	C62	
Kevin William Hall	Union	C268	
Keith Hammerton	Cana	C116	
David Lightbown	Hutchinson	C381	
John Pritchard	Prince Alfred	C1218	
Thomas Ross Turnbull	Cathedral	C7814	
30 YEARS			
Terence Jones	Tudor	C277	
Marco Lysiuk	Hutchinson	C381	
John Douglas Nesbitt	Imperial George	C78	
George Keith Price	Hartshead	C7042	
Dean Wild	Hollingworth	C2702	
40 YEARS			
Raymond Edwin Barnes	Concord Deane	C37	
Fred Beadsworth	Werneth	C6163	
Raymond David Broughton	St George's	C1723	
Martin Stuart Caller	Ark and Menorah	C6594	
Leonard Walter Phair	Chapter of Hope	C54	
David Riley	Bank Terrace	C462	
Roland William Tuke	St John's	C348	
50 YEARS			
Henry Alan John Garnett	Alexandra	C993	





One of the best parts of the role of an APGP is getting out to visit Chapters and sample the uniqueness of the Royal Arch ritual and the different ways our Masonic Halls operate. As described by the 3rd ProvGP in the previous article, differences in ritual can be enormous even in Chapters of the same age working just a few miles apart, and if you have been to Bacup you will have sampled some of the individuality of our Halls. Here our APGPs tell you something of their visits and other aspects of their duties



From the North EComp Aubrey Oldham, PGStB, APGP



Dear Brethren and Companions, it doesn't seem two minutes since we were all locked down and unable to attend meetings. How great it has been over the last few months to to be getting out and about again meeting old friends and new ones

whether they be Brethren or Companion's new to either Craft or Royal Arch, or perhaps both. We would all wish and hope that every Brother in time, completes his Masonic Journey and joins the Royal Arch, until then he is missing a key piece of Masonic and self knowledge. You could say its like reading a great book, but then forgetting to read the last Chapter.

The Northern Area, includes East Ribble, Burnley & Pendle, covering Masonic Halls in Accrington, Clayton-le-Moors, Clitheroe, Darwen, Burnley, Colne, Padiham and Whalley. We currently have 17 Chapters across the Area. All our Masonic Halls are without doubt fine buildings having Lodge and Chapter rooms of great character. Burnley probably has one of the largest meeting rooms, and Whalley, has one of the smallest, but also one of the finest. If you have never visited a Lodge or Chapter in the Northern Area, then its time you made a special trip north, you will be rewarded by a warm welcoming atmosphere in wonderful surroundings.

Recently we have had a personal 50th Celebration, that of EComp Dennis Heskett, PProvGSStB. which was held in Abbey Chapter No. 2529 at Whalley on the 15th September 2022, and we have another upcoming, that of EComp Ian Jeffery Williams, PProvDepGSWB, which will be held at Red Rose of Lancaster Chapter 1504, at Padiham on the 14th December 2022.

Part of my role since becoming an APGP involves developing an overview and support framework for the RADOs and Lodge Royal Arch Representatives (LRARs), across the Province. I have some background in this having held both roles, first as a Lodge Royal Arch Representative, then Serving the Rochdale District as their RADO, or as we used to be called DORAs, for some 6 years. You would have thought that the Royal Arch Cabinet would have wanted to get rid of me a while back!

In 2018, under the guidance of my predecessor EComp David Dunn, all Districts and Areas were visited by senior members of the Provincial Team who gave a presentation to existing LRARs, formalising the scope and expectations of the LRAR role. It stressed their principle role was to assist Master Masons to understand the importance of taking the next step in their Masonic development by entering the Royal Arch.



I have developed this presentation over the summer and updated David's presentation, adding the latest data on the membership of the Craft and Royal Arch, and the Provincial Team will support them in their role.

It is hoped that over time the role of LRAR, will achieve a higher profile with members of the Craft within their Lodges.

The Royal Arch is a great Order and one to be proud of. Enjoy your meetings, look after your Companions, keep in touch with all those who don't quite feel ready to meet again. Tell them how we are enjoying our Royal Arch meetings again. In particular, tell them what is happening and make sure they are kept up to date with everything in your Chapters.

Most of all do what feels right for you, and enjoy your Royal Arch Freemasonry.



From the South
EComp Peter Douthwaite,
APGP

I have responsibility for the presentation known as "Talking Heads"

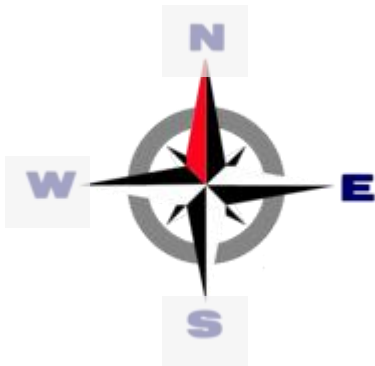
Talking Heads is an introduction to the Supreme Degree of the Holy Royal Arch, aimed particularly at those who are Master Masons but who have not yet joined this order.



When a brother is Raised, he will have received a letter of invitation to join the Royal Arch, from the Provincial Grand Master. In that letter he will have been informed that our Order is most closely aligned to the Craft and therefore the appropriate "next step" in Freemasonry.

'Talking Heads' is a very relaxed and enjoyable presentation, coupled with some elements of humour. It gives an insight into the origins and history of our Order, and it is hoped that once seen, Brethren will have been stimulated enough to want to join.

We are in the process of launching a series of presentations across the Province and are asking you to encourage those Brethren in your lodges to attend the presentation which hopefully will encourage Master Masons to join.

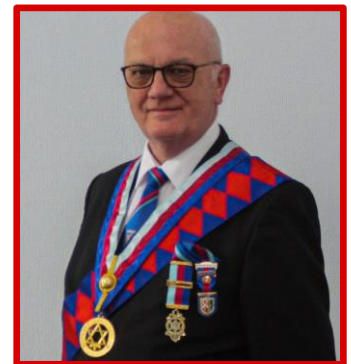


From the East
EComp Steven Boyle,
APGP

Since the start of my tenure as APGP of Eastern Area I have managed to get out to several Chapters.

The first Chapter that I went along to with my RADO Andrew Evans was Strength 286 in Bacup, where I was warmly welcomed and

witnessed an Exaltation of the highest standards When the Chapter closed we all visited a local Italian Restaurant for a veritable cornucopia of refreshment.



Since then, there has been a visit to Rochdale for a demonstration by the East Lancashire Royal Arch Presentation Team and I have visited Chapters in Shaw and Middleton Masonic Halls. It's good to see the different ways in which Chapters do their ceremonies, it always intrigues me.

Strangely enough there are only 2 Halls in East Lancashire Province that I have never visited, and they were Bacup and Shaw. I feel my Sojourn of the Province is now complete, but still an ongoing progression.

In September I attended Unity Chapter 298 (consecrated 14/2/1887), where initially the members had decided to close the Chapter but instead it will be handed over to the Malta Group of Lodges, who were in the process of petitioning for a new Chapter.

I have many more visits within my Area planned along with a few more in other Areas, I look forward to meeting as many of you as I can.

Fiat Lux



From the West *EComp Peter Faulkner* *APGP*

Companions, we seem to be flying through the months with meetings galore, but what I find so encouraging is the passion and enthusiasm of all the Companions for the months ahead. There are tremendous reports of new exaltations across the Province and indeed



the settling down of joiners from closed Chapters, all good news, but sadly tempered by the passing of good friends, who had given service to the Royal Arch over many years, our thoughts of enjoyable times passed are great memories.

I try to support all the Chapters in Western Area by visiting, however if you have anything special planned please do let me know, diary permitting I would be pleased to support.

You can see in the list of **celebrations two 50th's** EComp David Brown on the 21st November at Prince Edwin's Chapter, Bury and EComp Kenneth Tyler on the 20th February 2023, at Concord Deane Chapter, Bolton. Please support these if at all possible.

Just a word now about **Hermes**, the electronic way forward for Scribe E's. I do recognise that Hermes may be a challenge for some and certainly changes our method of updating membership data to name but one area. If you feel stuck please ask for help and advice, support is readily available to make the transition to paperless easier.

It would be remiss not to mention **the Festival**, but also to recognise that your individual donations probably come through your Craft membership/s. The support that the Royal Arch Chapters offer is well recognised and is a very tangible contribution, I can only encourage each Chapter to remember that the Festival remains uppermost in our charitable contributions.

This newsletter will come out before the next meeting of East Lancashire Provincial Grand Officers Chapter No 3747 (Installation) on the 13th October at Manchester Hall, I hope you see many of you there.

Best wishes





Musings from the Retiring Editor

A bit of personal background to the musings in this newsletter: 10 years ago I was diagnosed with chronic lymphocytic leukaemia (CLL). The progress of the cancer is monitored by counting the number of white blood cells called lymphocytes in the blood and looking for enlargement of lymph glands. CLL inhibits the immune system, so during the lockdown I was amongst the “Extremely Vulnerable”. A year ago my lymphocyte count reached 600 times the upper limit of normal. All of these lymphocytes were malignant. They had also infiltrated and enlarged all my lymph glands and spleen and there was even a deposit in a lung. A decision was made to start treatment.



All during lockdown and on treatment I tried to carry out my duties as an APGP, except that, being extremely vulnerable, after lockdown I wasn't able to attend Masonic meetings. All this time I was supported to the hilt by the Provincial team.

On treatment I was even more vulnerable and 9 months into the 12 month treatment cycle I contracted Covid. The Covid took its toll. I can remember going into hospital in early June, but nothing else until early July when I woke up on the ITU at the Manchester Royal Infirmary.

In the intervening 5 weeks I joined the “less than 5% club”! Apparently the Covid virus infected all my organs and caused my lungs, liver, heart and kidneys to stop working. My wife was told I had less than a 1 in 20 chance of survival and that she should spend as much of the few hours I had left to live at my bedside. However, thanks to the wonderful doctors and nurses of the Manchester Royal Infirmary, I was one of the lucky 5% and after several crises I gradually started to recover.

When I woke up from my induced coma, unaware of how poorly I had been and still thinking it was June, I found myself on a ventilator and none of my muscles seemed to work. I had lost two and a half stone but to my disappointment it was all lost from my muscles and not from my paunch!

By early August, as I was in as good medical condition as I could expect to be, the physiotherapists, and occupational therapists and speech therapists took over my “care”. These are people trained by the Inquisition, but they were necessarily hard on me to get me out of bed, walking, swallowing, breathing and caring for myself. Apparently remarkably (I was even told on one occasion I would need to stay in hospital until Christmas!) just four weeks after waking up I was transferred to the High Dependency Unit. Because my rehabilitation had gone so well, 5 days later I came home to continue my recovery. I was very breathless, could barely walk and couldn't climb stairs. It was clear that I would not be able to go to Masonic meetings or really carry out any of my APGP duties until Christmas at the earliest. So following discussion with the Deputy Grand Superintendent I stepped down as APGP as from this October's meeting of East Lancashire Provincial Grand Officers Chapter, five months before the end of my 4 year tenure. I will be succeeded by EComp Dr Mo Afsa, who I know will do a fantastic job.

Because I had no immunity for much of the time I was on ITU, I could not clear the Covid from my system and I was isolated in a side room. Same four walls, same ceiling, same monitoring equipment around and inside me for four weeks. My immune system started to recover in early August, but the PCR test for Covid remained stubbornly positive until two days before I was discharged.

So why am I writing this in a Masonic Royal Arch document? During those four weeks of enforced isolation, I had lots of time to think, and inevitably my thoughts turned to Freemasonry. I should add that the main reason for thinking along these lines was because, had it not been for my Masonic friends, I would have led a very reclusive existence and life would have been poorer.



As they do, my thoughts turned to the basic tenets of Freemasonry – Brotherly love, Relief and Truth. There is no doubt that from the start of treatment for CLL until now all three were shown to me by the bushel and for that I will be eternally grateful. In particular, I was contacted regularly by three of the finest masons I have ever had the privilege of knowing, Harvey Basger DepGSupt, John Farrington DepPGM and Warwick Davenport, PastAPGM a very good friend. Those frequent but irregularly timed communications by phone and email kept me in touch with the Masonic world in East Lancashire and made me feel wanted. They were not alone, I also received calls and messages of support from Masonic friends and the Almoners of all the twelve Lodges and Chapters I belong to, including the bellringers Lodge, Clavis 8585, based in the Province of Oxfordshire.

I could not help thinking how lucky I was to be part of an organisation that really cares. Are there other caring organisations to match Freemasonry? Religious organisations I guess, but I can't think of many others. I also wondered whether other organisations display the same caring attitudes out of a love or more through a sense of duty.

I have no brothers or sisters and so have no direct experience of filial love. However there must be millions of men in the UK alone that have male siblings and therefore brotherly love must be widespread. So why does Freemasonry make such a thing about it? Well, I guess my experiences give the answer. I have no blood ties with any of the many Masons who contacted me to find out how I was and wish me well, but they kept in touch just the same, and genuinely cared.

Anyway, the Great Architect rejected my application to attend the Grand Lodge above, probably because He understands that I need to repay my debt of gratitude to all my Masonic friends. He patched me up and sent me back into the game, so I shall mug up my ritual and contribute all I can to the Masonic life of East Lancashire whilst having a thoroughly good time. It has been great producing the Newsletter and I hope that you have found it informative and amusing. I wish my successor, EComp Peter Faulkner, as much fun in producing it as I have had.

EComp Tony Freemont PGStB, PAPGP.





Royal Arch Upcoming and Future Events

2022

- 13 Oct (Thu) 3747 Chapter (Installation). Manchester Hall
- 14 Oct (Fri) Personal 50th - EComp Ian Williams, Red Rose of Lancaster Chapter. Padiham Masonic Hall
- 9 Nov (Wed) Supreme Grand Chapter (half-yearly). Great Queen Street, London
- 17 Nov (Thur) Provincial Grand Lodge (EL). King George's Hall, Blackburn
- 18 Nov (Fri) Personal 50th of EComp David Dean. Lord Stanley Chapter. Manchester Hall
- 21 Nov (Mon) Personal 50th - EComp David Brown. Prince Edwin's Chapter. Bury Masonic Hall
- 24 Nov (Thur) Personal 50th of Ecomp John Pervical. Werneth Chapter. Rochdale Masonic Hall
- 4 Dec (Sun) Carol Service, 2pm. St Ann's Church, Manchester
- 5 Dec (Mon) Provincial Grand Stewards' Chapter 8408 TBA
- 12 Dec (Mon) Dedication of the Chapter Room at Salford. MEGS in attendance. Portland Chapter, Salford

2023

- 20 Feb (Mon) Personal 50th of EComp John Tyler at Concord Deane Chapter. Bolton Masonic Hall
- 22 Feb (Wed) Final presentation of the 'Royal Arch Exaltation Ceremony Explained'. Ardwick Chapter No.2185. Audenshaw Masonic Hall. We are grateful to the Learning and Development Team for facilitating that re-arranged date.
- 6 Mar (Mon) Provincial Grand Stewards' Chapter 8408. Manchester Hall
- 16 Mar (Thur) Provincial Grand Chapter (EL) . King George's Hall, Blackburn
- 27 Mar (Mon) Cheshire Provincial Grand Chapter meeting TBA
- 26/27 April United Grand Lodge and Supreme Grand Chapter investitures
- 11 May (Thur) 3747 Chapter. Manchester Hall
- 18 May (Thur) Cumberland and Westmorland Provincial Grand Chapter. Carlisle
- 22 May (Mon) 6.30 for 7.00 Grand Officers' meeting with PGM/MEGS. Middleton Masonic Hall
- 23 May (Tues) 1.00 for 1.30 Grand Officers' meeting with PGM/MEGS. Ash Day Lea
- 10 Jun (Sat) Royal Arch Banquet. Manchester Hall
- 6 Oct (Fri) Passing the Veils. Bolton District. St George's Chapter 1723. TBA.
- 12 Oct (Thur) 3747 Chapter Installation. Manchester Hall
- 8 Nov (Wed) Supreme Grand Chapter. London
- 16 Nov (Thur) Provincial Grand Lodge of East Lancashire. Blackburn
- 4 Dec (Mon) 8408 Provincial Grand Stewards' Chapter. TBA

