



WYP Monthly Newsletter

Staffordshire Freemasons Digital News



Issue 11

Annual Convocation of Provincial Grand Chapter

Address by the ME Grand Superintendent,
E Comp Robin A Stubbs

Companions, a very warm welcome back!

In considering and gathering together the key points that I wanted to communicate today, my thoughts immediately moved back to my Christmas message, as that was a good half-way checkpoint, where I could assess and acknowledge the immense progress that we'd made, by then, to plan and implement our resumption activities.

I reflected that the most striking theme was the remarkable resolve of you all to meet, and resume, the normal business of your Chapters with whatever resources you had available. When looking ahead to the rest of the year to come, I was assured that your persistence and determination would prevail and that, together, we would continue our journey of renewal, and thus, our enjoyment of Royal Arch masonry.



Now Companions, I'm not normally good at predictions, hence no large lottery win to-date, but you have exceeded my expectations and made me a very proud Grand Superintendent. There are still many challenges of course, particularly where some of our members remain uncertain about returning. On this very important matter Companions, please do keep in regular contact with them to talk about the recent business of the Chapter, let them know that they were, and are missed, and encourage them to come and join you as soon as they are ready.

Companions, the good news is, we are starting to see some green shoots of recovery. Our rate of overall member loss has reduced sharply, certainly compared to year end to Dec 2020, and to Dec 2021. We are now on the cusp of overall member gain. We have much to do, and I'm afraid, a long way to go, in order to recover losses from the past two years, but I'm confident that we can make real progress over the next two years and beyond.

When resuming last July, I, together with my senior team had the immense privilege, but very busy activity of supporting not only your scheduled Installations, but also the supplemental ones that were necessary following resumption, in order to align with Regulations - some called at very short notice. I wish to thank all of my senior team for their enthusiasm, commitment and flexibility, and also EComp Andy Brittle and our Director of Ceremonies and his team, for stepping forward to support these visits. Companions, I can assure you that, without exception, we all thoroughly enjoyed joining and supporting you on your return.

We've also celebrated over the season with a number of our members who have reached their 50 or 60th Royal Arch anniversaries. In particular I congratulate: - On their 50th anniversaries: EComps Jim Birkin, Bob Dodds, Tony Simey, Tony Bentley, Barrie Parrish (St Edwards Chapter), Nigel Davies, Keith Thomas, Mike Masters, Gerry Turner and John Glover; and on their very special 60th anniversaries: EComps Bill Whittall and Kevin Chawner. Congratulations to them all on their impressive achievements!

Companions, it was a great privilege to support Burslem Chapter on a full-scale provincial visit in order to dedicate their new Chapter Banner. It was a real delight to have the provincial team present to join with Burslem Chapter members and visitors in celebrating this special and memorable occasion, which marked a new direction and fresh start for the Chapter.

The Banner Dedication ceremony itself was the first in Staffordshire for some considerable years, and we had no procedure of our own readily available. I am indebted to my good friend and Grand Superintendent from Worcestershire, EComp John Phenix, for providing us with a Worcestershire version. You could say that it was very gratefully received and faithfully applied!

I take this opportunity to personally thank the acting Provincial Officers of 2020 and 2021 who joined us on our visits across the season, at both Installation and regular Convocations. The Chapters themselves have visibly welcomed and valued your support, as have I, and the other Presiding Officers. Thank you all, very much indeed.

Companions, our close relationship with the Craft Executive has gone from strength to strength over the past three years - despite the difficulties brought by Covid and associated lockdowns.

We are now dusting down our former plans from 2020 to share facilities at our respective Annual Meetings. Hence on 9th May 2023, we shall meet together here at the County Showground, with the Annual Convocation of Provincial Grand Chapter taking place in the

morning. Following a shared luncheon, the Provincial Grand Lodge AGM will take place. We owe it to our membership to responsibly manage the costs of these events and to limit our call on your time. To share one special day together makes a great deal of sense, for so many reasons.

Companions, reciprocal full-scale visits with the Craft, where we each support one of the other's full-scale visits with a delegation of our own, are planned for resumption during the next visiting season. These reciprocal visits serve, not only to support the particular Lodge or Chapter on their special celebratory evening, but also to readily demonstrate our unique partnership and special relationship.

We will continue to work closely with neighbouring Provinces and the newly formed Royal Arch Regional Liaison Group (RLG) to discuss and develop other opportunities to promote positive and constructive change that enables the Royal Arch to flourish. The RLG is chaired by EComp Michael Holland (GSupt Glos & Herefordshire), who is present today.

This group, through the Committee of General Purposes, was instrumental in pursuing the formalisation of the Offices of Provincial Grand Membership Officer and Provincial Grand Communications Officer as optional collared appointments that a Grand Superintendent be empowered to make. With notice of this proposal given at Supreme Grand Chapter on 28th April, the next Convocation in November should see it ratified and we shall then, finally, be able to invest EComps Ralph Ritchey and Mike Santopietro with the new collars and jewels of their respective Offices - and very well deserved they are too!

I take this opportunity to thank EComp Holland for his excellent leadership of the RLG and for his support of this and other initiatives. I strongly believe that this greatly improved communications link, from Grand Superintendents through to our high rulers, will be of immense benefit to us all.

Companions, I was very proud to be part of a small (but perfectly formed) Staffordshire party attending Supreme Grand Chapter on the 28th April to celebrate the achievements of some of our members. I heartily congratulate EComps Ralph Howarth and Andy Mapperson on their first appointments in Supreme Grand Chapter to PGStB, and EComp Gary Evans to PAGDC.

Gary holds Royal Arch membership across Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire, and his nomination was through Warwickshire where he's been particularly active for many years. As Staffordshire is his mother province, we, quite rightly, are also very proud of him and his achievements.

I also congratulate our Provincial Grand Master, EComp John Lockley on his promotion to PDepGSwdB.

In a rare double, at Grand Lodge the day before, EComp Howarth also received his first appointment in the Craft to PAGDC. Well done to you all Companions!

Companions, we are all here today to transact the regular business of Provincial Grand Chapter. The highlight of which, the most important and rewarding aspect (in my view) is to appoint and promote the Provincial Officers for the ensuing year.

This now having been successfully completed, I take this opportunity to congratulate all of you on your achievements. Your award is not only a recognition of your past commitment and dedication to your Chapter and this Province, but also an expectation that you will continue in your endeavours to promote the Royal Arch, and guide and mentor those more junior members around you, so that they too, may ultimately enjoy the privilege of Provincial rank.

I congratulate the Deputy Grand Superintendent, and 2nd and 3rd Provincial Grand

Principals, EComps Eddie Ford, Ralph Howarth and Paul Lockley, on their reappointments and thank them sincerely for their support and wise counsel, as well as their demonstrably high standards and commitment to the Royal Arch in Staffordshire.

I also thank the other senior working Provincial Officers on the Executive: -

Our Prov GSE, EComp Matt Gibbons, who discovered that the only way to get a break from his busy duties in the Craft and Royal Arch was to badly injure himself in a serious fall, the early consequences of which were to cause him considerable pain and discomfort, and us considerable concern for his well-being. What a delight it is, to now see him safely back with us, whilst continuing his recovery back to good health. Thank you, Matt, for the planning for today, and for the immense work that you do to support the senior team, this Province, our Chapters and members.

To our outgoing Provincial Grand Scribe Nehemiah, EComp Selwyn Burton, for his support and welcome advice, for the time taken to visit our Chapters on their regular Convocations and for appraising us of their health and well-being. Selwyn, your very positive input has been both extremely valued and appreciated. Thank you.

And to our Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies, EComp Chris Adams for his very keen eye and dedication to his duties, and that of his team of DCs in support of all of our ceremonial activities, including for today which has, as usual, been planned and executed with precision. Thank you, Chris, for the very high standard of work that you and your team have undertaken during this season.

I am additionally immensely grateful to the other acting Provincial Officers in key working roles, all of whom give their free time to support our members, and for those many and various activities that keep the provincial



organisation and machinery running smoothly.

I thank EComp Richard Parrott and his team for providing the necessary transport, collection and assembly of the Chapter furniture, as well as dismantling it immediately following this convocation and ensuring its safe return, and also EComp Maurice Williams for his invaluable assistance in preparing for today.

I also extend my thanks to the admin team in the Provincial Office for their support through a particularly difficult period.

Companions, our Chapter Support Group have been busy doing exactly as their name suggests - as well as developing new initiatives, and our Communications Officer has been supporting RA Ambassadors in their Lodges with regular briefing nuggets to assist them with their reports. My sincere thanks to you all.



Companions, the Royal Arch is to be enjoyed, not endured. I was particularly struck by recent comments made by the ME 3rd Grand Principal, EComp Gareth Jones during a visit to Leicestershire and Rutland's annual convocation, at which I was present. He commented on the need to ensure that the occasion of an Exaltation should be memorable for the candidate, for all the right reasons.



However, a survey of recent Exaltees has shown that a large proportion reported that, whilst the ceremony of Exaltation was impressive, colourful and memorable, lectures that followed were too much, too soon, and took away much of the experience.

His suggestion was, that the only additional ritual to follow an Exaltation on that same evening should be the Preface to the Lectures, with the lectures themselves being delivered on subsequent occasions.

I have asked my Deputy, EComp Eddie Ford to lead a review of this approach and we shall communicate our deliberations. Any recommended actions for Chapters, will of course, be optional.

I can also announce that in the Autumn, we shall be launching our new Royal Arch Visiting Officer's Scheme. These VOs are past Active Provincial Officers who will be self-funded and will sit in the body of the Chapter with the Companions, much as normal visitors - they are not attending in the position of a Presiding Officer. They should be viewed as a friend of the Chapter. More detailed information will be circulated before the new season commences.

Companions, I remain most honoured and humbled in being your Grand Superintendent and, as I now commence my 4th year in Office, I pledge to continue my endeavours in ensuring that enjoyment remains at the very heart of all that we do, and hope that you too Companions will seek to achieve and maintain this very important aim.



I wish you all well for the season to come. My team and I are very much looking forward to visiting your Chapters and enjoying your companionship.

May the True and Living God Most High keep you safe, and grant us all good health and happiness in our tasks ahead, and until we meet again.

Thank you, Companions.

Round Table Lodges' Biennial Weekend



North Staffordshire Round Table Lodge No. 8355 hosted the Round Table Lodge Biennial Weekend at Crewe Hall Hotel, Weston Road, Crewe between 10th and 12th June 2022. A small committee was formed to organise and execute the Weekend.

On the Friday morning, Brethren from the Lodge arrived at Crewe Hall Hotel to create a Lodge Room in the former Drawing Room of Crewe Hall using furniture borrowed from The Iron Bridge Lodge No. 9897, along with items borrowed from Shelton Masonic Centre. The room was full with 65 in attendance, to witness

a fantastic double initiation of Mr Ben Pilkington, and, Mr Mark Tarpey. The Worshipful Master opened his Lodge and handed over to the Immediate Past Master, W Bro V Bata, at the point of introducing the Candidates. W Bro Bata assisted by W Bro PM Molley acting as Junior Deacon, took the Candidates through their Initiation. W Bro PD Bone acted as DC. Bro MD McGuinness gave an eloquent rendition of the Working Tools whilst Bro TP Nacson presented a word perfect first half of the Charge after Initiation. Before being seated with his Brethren, Bro Pilkington was presented with the Charge to a Lewis, by his Father, Bro R Pilkington. Greetings on behalf of all the visitors were presented by the R W Pro Provincial Grand Master for Middlesex, R W Bro PRA Baker.

The Alms collection raised an incredible £432.50

At the same time as the Lodge Meeting, the ladies were involved in guided tour of the hotel before meeting in the former Library for their own dinner and guest speaker.

On completion of the meals, all the attendees came together for extended fellowship.

Saturday started early for the organising team before the coach arrived to take all attendees to Middleport Pottery in Burslem. A most enjoyable tour of the Pottery took place with knowledgeable Guides who fielded many questions.

On returning to Crewe Hall, afternoon tea was served.

In the evening a Gala Dinner had been organised in the Long Gallery. Dinner jackets were the theme as well as former Round Table/Ladies Circle/41 Club and Tangent jewels to be worn. A fabulous evening ensued with accompaniment from a string trio called Highly Strung. The ladies enjoying their jewellery gift.

At the close of the Dinner, it was announced the next Biennial Weekend would be hosted by the Louis Marchesi Lodge No. 9558 in the Province of Devon. The Worshipful Master presented W Bro J Turner PPrSGD with the gavel, hand-made by W Bro PD Bone PPrSGD, to celebrate the Biennial Weekends were now firmly back. Suggestions were mooted by Lodges to host 2026 and 2028 Weekends!

The raffle raised a staggering £625.00.

Our attendees left on Sunday after receiving a thank you gift of oat cakes, a Staffordshire Hoard mug each, details of the next event to be held in 2024 at a venue in Torquay all contained in a Gladstone Pottery jute shopping bag.

The Lodge received many messages of congratulations for what was felt to be a complete weekend equally shared between Freemasonry and Round Table.



North Staffordshire Round Table Lodge No. 8355 - The Round Table Lodge Biennial Weekend 10th to 12th June 2022
Crewe Hall Hotel, Crewe, Cheshire



Centenary Meeting of John O'Gaunt Lodge No. 4054

The John O'Gaunt Lodge No. 4054 assembled at Freemason Hall, Garden Street, Newcastle, Staffordshire at 6pm on Tuesday 7th June 2022 to celebrate their long-awaited Centenary meeting. It was originally due to take place on Tuesday 2nd June 2020, that being 100 years from its consecration in 1920 but, due to the Pandemic restrictions had to be postponed. Then, rescheduled for Tuesday 1st June 2021, it was again postponed, once more due to the Pandemic restrictions. Then finally, and to the great relief of the members the Centenary celebrations eventually took place.



The Provincial Grand Master R.W. Bro. John Lockley, accompanied by his Deputy, V. W. Bro. David Thomas, and both Assistant Provincial Grand Masters, W. Bro. Michele Santopietro and W. Bro. John Derry were in attendance. Also, fifteen Acting Provincial Officers, a number on invited guests and together with Lodge members, a total of 64 Brethren were present to enjoy the evening.

The Ceremony was undertaken with the Provincial Grand Master

in the Chair assisted by all of his officers, which provided a quite spectacular and wonderful memory of the event.

The Minutes of the consecration meeting and a short history of the Lodge were given. The Centenary Warrant was then formally presented to W. Bro. Marcus Frieder, P. Pr. JGW Worshipful Master of the Lodge by the Provincial Grand Master. Each member of the Lodge was then presented with their own Centenary Jewel by the Provincial Grand Master, which each member, will wear with great pride.

After the formal Proceedings, all Brethren then retired for the Festive Board, where much chat ensued. Each guest was given a full History of the Lodge and a miniature bottle of malt whiskey with the Lodge crest on, as a memento of the evening. Everyone departed home with much happiness after an excellent Masonic evening.



Staffs County Show June 2022.

What a Show, records broken in every department, that is the summary of our visit with the Provincial Display Trailer to this year's Staffordshire County Show. Following last year's somewhat limited show due to the pandemic, we were apprehensive as to the numbers of



people who would attend.

Again, we had the Air Ambulance Pod complete with helicopter and the Blood bikes complementing our stand. Restrictions now being lifted meant that visitors especially children could sit in the helicopter cabin and play pilots as well as have their picture taken riding the huge blood motor bike.

There were long queues for both, this meant that the waiting queues could not miss our trailer, plus we were giving out notebooks and masonic pens to the children.

There were record crowds on the first day at the show and the show later featured on Midlands Today TV, no doubt helped by the good weather. Little did we know of what was to come!

On the next day, a good weather forecast and the fact it was a national holiday, saw a massive increase in visitors. I was told an additional 10,000 tickets had been sold online overnight, alone. The huge main car park was closed at midday, and it was taking up to 3 hours to get to the ground from the M6 due to the numbers arriving.

A lot of the stalls ran out of "Give Aways" pens / bags etc by midmorning, we on the masonic trailer had the biggest "Footfall" and interest shown ever. Our profile with the public has arisen to levels we have never experienced, as the public begin to realise just what we do for charity. No longer are we being seen as the "Men in Black" or "Devil Worshipers".

This year's show has been the best we have ever had, raising our profile, and putting masonry as a society for good in the eyes of the public.

My thanks must go to all those who helped staff the Provincial Display Trailer and interact with the public, especially Terry Fitchett who stepped in at the last minute to tow the trailer to and from the show, Mike Sharples for his company and the photographs and Jo (Air ambulance) and David, (Blood bikes) whose enthusiasm was unflagging.

John Skellern Prov G.Ch. Stwd. June 2022.



Burslem Chapter 98 - Blue Table and Motorcycle Ride...

On July 9th Burslem Chapter 98 met for their first "Summer Meeting" at Chase Golf Club with many turning up on their Motorcycles.

A short business meeting was held, after which the Chapter room was cleared and a short presentation on Royal Arch Freemasonry was presented to newer members (and Light Blues) and to those who were interested in joining.



This was followed by a friendly "Blue Table" meal, served in a Buffet style in a side room to the Golf Club Bar, after which several members went for a small ride to Blithfield Reservoir for a much needed Ice Cream.

We had good feedback on the presentation and hope to have made a useful impression on prospective members and helped them to look at the potential of taking further steps in their Masonic journey.

Burslem Chapter is open to all potential members - whether you are a Motorcyclist or not - you can be assured of a good reception, professional ritual mixed with a lively and friendly reception.

