



# WYP Monthly Newsletter

Staffordshire Freemasons Digital News



Issue 22



UNITED GRAND LODGE  
OF ENGLAND



SUPREME GRAND CHAPTER  
OF ROYAL ARCH MASONS  
OF ENGLAND

One  
Organisation

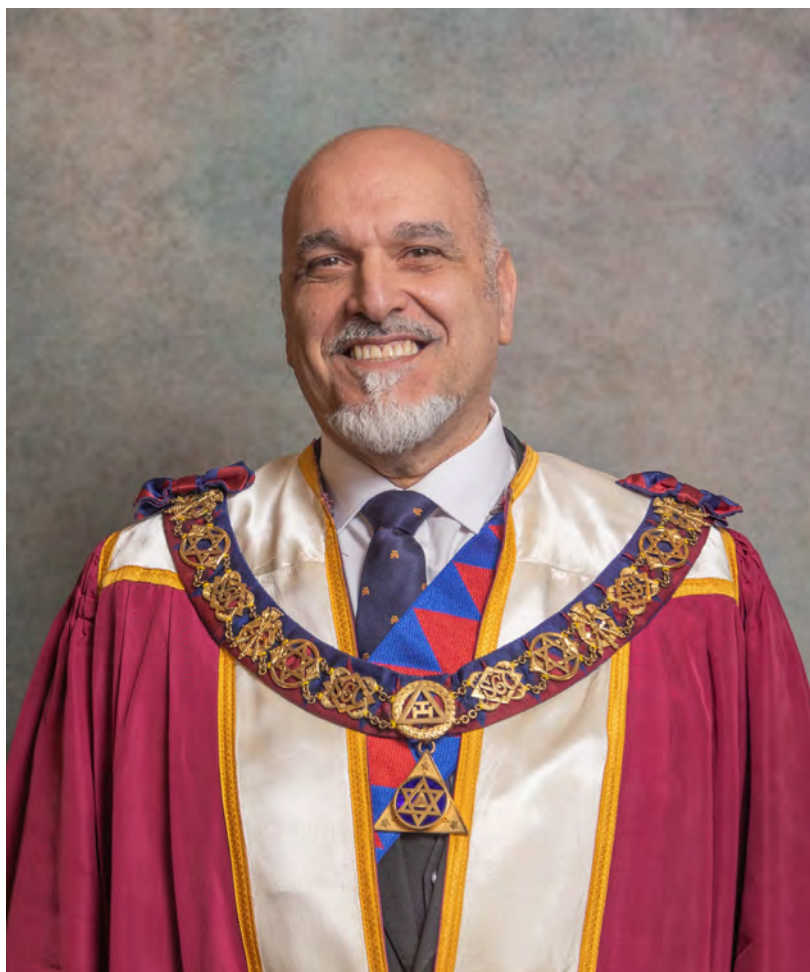


# The Annual Convocation of Provincial Grand Chapter.

**It was in November 2023**, the then Grand Superintendent ME Comp Robin Stubbs announced his intention to stand down and that E Comp Michele Santopietro, had graciously accepted an offer of appointment as the Grand Superintendent Designate.

And so, on the morning of Tuesday 5th March 2024 the Installation took place at the County Showground, Stafford, and was conducted by Steven Varley the Past Third Grand Principal of Royal Arch Masons in England and Wales.

The Annual Convocation of Provincial Grand Chapter duly followed in the afternoon after lunch, with over 150 companions attending and enjoying both meetings. In this meeting the newly installed Grand Superintendent was able not only to address all the companions present but to appoint, re-appoint or promote and invest his officers for the forthcoming year.



Ralph Howarth was appointed the Deputy Grand Superintendent, with Paul Lockley as Second Principal and Paul Foster as Third Principal. Paul Crutchley became Scribe N taking over that position from Ralph Ritchey and many congratulations to the 45 members who were either appointed or promoted. The ME Grand Superintendent addressed all the companions present.





# Address from the Most Excellent Grand Superintendent

I am very pleased to see so many of you here today and to welcome again all our guests. This is always a very important occasion in our calendar, and I am delighted to report that this remains a very happy and enthusiastic Province.

This Annual Meeting, of course, marks a year of change in terms of the Grand Superintendent. However, I am delighted to re-appoint the Deputy Grand Superintendent, the Second and Third Provincial Grand Principals, the Provincial Grand Scribe Ezra and Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies which allows the Province some considerable stability in the Executive. They have equipped themselves very well over the last few years, and I look forward to their counsel going forward, as we plan the future of Royal Arch Masonry in Staffordshire.

To those who have stepped down from their active roles, I thank you very much for your service to the Province. To our outgoing Provincial Grand Scribe Nehemiah, E Companion Ralph Ritchey, thank you for the time taken to visit our Chapters on their regular Convocations and for appraising us of their health and well-being. Ralph, your input has been both valued and appreciated. Thank you.

It is an unusual situation Companions, in that, because of the early date of this meeting, the outgoing officers have had less than a year in office, and one or two of them still have duties to undertake for another couple of months yet. I would therefore ask Chapters to ensure that for the remainder of this season, invitations to your meetings are sent to both the outgoing officers and the incoming ones. I hope that in doing so, not only will all involved have an extended period to enjoy their roles, but the Chapters themselves may also benefit from increased attendance at their Convocations.

A long list of thanks too. To E Companion Matt Gibbons, our Provincial Grand Scribe Ezra – I cannot think of a harder working man. The time and effort you put into your

duties is incredible and I thank you for all your efforts in preparing for both meetings today. I have some inkling of how much work has been involved, but I am equally certain that there are other aspects of which I remain ignorant. Our Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies, E Companion Chris Adams has been equally consumed with tasks in readiness for today, and I thank you too for all your work.

I am also 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 E Companion 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 our Alms collectors who will shortly take your Alms collection. Also, thanks to E Companion 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 and would ask our Provincial Grand Scribe Ezra to pass on my thanks to those in the Office.

To those who have been appointed today, I congratulate you. These honours are all very well deserved. They are both an acknowledgement of what you have achieved in Royal Arch Masonry so far, but also an encouragement for what we hope you will achieve in the future. I particularly encourage all new Active Officers to get out and about in the Province. It really is a special year which I guarantee you will remember fondly, and it would be a shame to miss out on all that enjoyment. You will receive a summons for each Chapter's Installation and to other special meetings during the year, and I encourage you to get to as many as your circumstances will permit. Please remember to reply, either accepting or tendering your apologies, as the Scribe Ezra's job can be stressful

enough around an installation meeting, without further uncertainties arising.

I know I speak for all of the Executive, when I say how grateful we have been to E Companions Eddie Ford, Richard Parrott, Andy Brittle, and Chris Adams for their assistance this year in presiding at some Installation meetings.

We've also celebrated over the season so far, a number of special occasions and anniversaries. We congratulate all those individuals and Chapters on their impressive achievements!

I am particularly pleased to report that since our last Annual Meeting, our membership has increased, albeit only by 5 members. We had 22 Exaltees, which, when added to the number of joining and re-joining members, totalled 38. Our losses in the same period were 33, leaving us with a net increase of 5, in the last 9 and a half months. A welcome, if small, increase in our numbers.

We are continuing on an upwards curve. Let us all strive to maintain the momentum in that direction. I say "all", because we must all look out for potential new Companions, and not just leave it to our Royal Arch Ambassadors in our Lodges.

On the matter of charity, Companions, I am delighted to report that you have acted magnificently in response to E Companion Robin Stubbs' challenge of supporting the craft 2024 Festival. We are tantalisingly close to the informal target set by him – so close, we can almost smell it! With six months to go, I would ask that, wherever possible, Chapters make one last push to get us over the line. And with that comment, I thank you all very much, on behalf of E Companion Stubbs for your extremely generous support.

That said, as ever, during a Festival, it is normal for the Provincial Grand Chapter Benevolent Fund to take a back seat as it were. It will therefore be our plan to replenish this important fund over the coming months and years. Today, that begins again, as today's collection will be for the benefit of that fund. Our Charity Steward will no doubt be able to sleep again tonight.

Companions, at the weekend, a few people received letters from Supreme Grand Chapter, advising them that they had received a first appointment to Grand rank, or that they had been promoted. Today, I am delighted to be able to announce the following: Receiving first appointment to the rank of Past Grand Standard Bearer are E Companions Selwyn Burton, Stuart Scott, and John Skellern. In addition, E Companion Trevor Roberts is being promoted to Past Assistant Grand Sojourner, and E Companion Ralph Howarth is being promoted to Past Grand Sword Bearer. Congratulations to you all!

Companions, it would be wonderful if we could get as many of us as possible to support them at Supreme Grand Chapter on the 25th April. Remember that you do not need a ticket to attend that Investiture, but you will need to book in with the Provincial Office for the Provincial lunch afterwards at the Verdi restaurant, just up the road from Great Queen Street.

Companions, there is no denying the challenges Freemasonry has faced in recent years: declining membership; Covid; Cost of living crisis. Any one of these is sufficient to dent our bodywork, but all three in such a short period of time, is indeed a challenge!

The main focus of my attention will initially be to look at how we as a Province can help, and this will involve the Executive team, along with key officers, coming up with a plan of action. We will look to build upon the initiatives already in place. We will continue the close working relationships we have with the craft, but will look to extend this to other Orders as well. We will seek to cement the fundamentals of Archway – the principles of Shape, Grow, Involve, and Enjoy, and a team will be set up to inform and guide Chapters if needed. With the Provincial Grand Master's permission, we will look to continue the joint Full Provincial Visits which have proven to be successful and popular. The Royal Arch Ambassador scheme, and the Chapter Support Group initiatives will be further enhanced. There will be regular meetings of the Chapter Executive to plan and strategise a five-year rolling plan and to report back on progress

to ensure we don't lose the momentum. I will also be looking at the potential to ensure that a member of the Executive attends every exaltation in the Province. Therefore, please make sure that we are aware of those ceremonies, by sending summonses to the Provincial Offices in a timely manner. Finally, and most importantly, Companions, we must work with the craft to ensure that membership there, increases. This is our fishing pond Companions and must be our starting point. All of these tasks are huge undertakings and cannot be done by the Executive team alone. We will therefore be looking for volunteers to assist us. Please look favourably on any request for assistance, especially if you have skill sets that would be useful. In fact, I would ask that you do not wait to be asked, but rather that you put your names forward, if you are able. Notwithstanding these initiatives, the onus for individual Chapter membership will always ultimately lie with the Chapters themselves. We will work with you and assist wherever possible, but your own endeavours will be crucial to yourselves.

Please be assured that any initiatives from The Province will be designed to assist and work with you, but these will NOT be forced upon you - they will only be offered if requested by you. When we advertise the existence of an initiative, it will be up to individual Chapters to seek to be involved.

In line with guidance from the Pro First Grand Principal, our Key Performance Indicators will be:

- To increase membership of the Royal Arch in this Province, both in terms of absolute numbers, and in the percentage of craft membership.
- To increase our profile in the community, either by donations or by time and service provided.
- To ensure that the Companions of Staffordshire continue to enjoy their membership of this wonderful Order.

To expand on the first of those KPIs, in this Province, we have steadily achieved around 38% of craft members being in the Royal Arch as well. This has continued for many years, but has never increased beyond that. I would love that figure to be nearer 50%; however, I accept that this is a very ambitious figure over my tenure. Our plan will look at how we can move this stubborn 38% figure along. We may call upon Chapters to share with us some success stories that we can pass on to other Chapters, to see if they too can benefit in a similar fashion.

Lastly, Companions, I suggested that I would like to work closely with other Orders too. I hope to build on the excellent work done by my predecessors and their teams in working with other Orders. Yes, of course, with craft, with whom we share so much, and have so many links, but also the relationships we have in Staffordshire with other Orders and Heads of Orders. I am certain that between us, we can support each other's aims and objectives. Indeed, we have a fine tradition of 'cross-membership'.

Companions it is a great privilege for me to lead this Royal Arch Province. My predecessors have always signed off by stressing how important it is that you enjoy yourselves, and I will not detract from that statement. Please enjoy your Royal Arch Masonry and I look forward to visiting your Chapters and enjoying your company too.

Thank you, Companions.

# Installation of the new Assistant Provincial Grand Master, Jeremy F. Roberts

**The March regular meeting of Streetly Lodge No. 7448** at the Masonic Hall, Aldridge was the setting for the installation of the new Assistant Provincial Grand Master, Jeremy F. Roberts.

There were over 100 Masons in attendance for an exceptional ceremony attended by the Provincial Grand Master John Lockley, his deputy David J. Thomas and his other assistant John Derry. The special guest for the ceremony was Steven Varley the Assistant Grand Master of the United Grand Lodge of England together with several Grand Lodge officers

The vacancy for the post was due to Assistant Provincial Grand Master, Michele Santopietro being appointed as Grand Superintendent in the Staffordshire Royal Arch and stepping down from his previous role. Jeremy's previous role as Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies was filled when one of his deputies, Matt Adderley was promoted to that position.

Jeremy, who is well known around the province, was initiated into Streetly Lodge No. 7448 on 26th January 2002 by his father, Brian. Jeremy's grandfather, Dr F.R. Roberts OBE, was the first initiate of the Lodge. Jeremy served as the Worshipful Master in 2009, he is currently the Lodge Secretary. He has also served as Charity Steward, Treasurer, Director of Ceremonies and Organist.



In Provincial Grand Lodge he was appointed as a Provincial Grand Steward in 2011. He promptly joined the Staffordshire Provincial Grand Steward's Lodge No. 9567 and is presently the Director of Ceremonies. He is also a member of Foster Gough Lodge No. 2706, Hatherton Lodge No. 2474 and an honorary member of Musket Pike and Drum Lodge, No. 9906 and Science Fiction and Fantasy Lodge, No. 10016.

2014 saw him appointed to the office of Provincial Assistant Grand Director of Ceremonies and a year later to Provincial Deputy Grand Director of Ceremonies where he remained for three years. Then he was promoted to Provincial Senior Grand Warden in 2019. His last appointment was to Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies in 2020 where he served the province throughout the Covid pandemic and then back into normal times where he remained until March 2024.

In April 2023 Jeremy was appointed as a Grand Officer, as Assistant Grand Director of Ceremonies in The United Grand Lodge of England, where he has accompanied the high rulers of craft freemasonry on their visits. He is active in the Royal Arch and became First principal in March 2018 of The Chapter of Honour No. 526 in Wolverhampton. He was appointed to Provincial Grand Sword Bearer in 2020.

After studying Theology at University, he left and moved into sales. He spent many years in the Electrical Manufacturing Sector rising to Sales Director. He is the owner of a children's day nursery in Worcestershire with his wife. He owns his own security business specialising in CCTV, Access Control and Intruder Alarms, where he designs, installs and maintains systems for businesses and private clients.

Married to Trudie for 25 years they have four children. Jeremy has many interests and these include music, he has played keyboard / piano and sung in a band, but he is also a level 2 Royal Yachting Association qualified sailor.

