

Royal Arch Masonry

The next regular step for the Master Mason

Provincial Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of Worcestershire

AFTER THE THIRD DEGREE

As a Master Mason you may well feel that you have completed the basic teaching of Freemasonry.

The three Craft degrees give the impression that they are self contained and complete, however, Royal Arch supplements the teaching of the three Craft degrees.

The Royal Arch is organised as a separate Order of Freemasonry distinct from the Craft degrees, yet it complements the teaching of the Craft, which can only be truly appreciated by those who have joined the Royal Arch. Indeed the Royal Arch is described as both the foundation and keystone of the whole Masonic structure; it is regarded as “the root, heart and marrow of Freemasonry”.

In Craft Masonry, a Brother acknowledges a belief in a “Supreme Being”, yet this relationship is never explored. In Royal Arch, the Mason continues and completes his education and knowledge of Craft Masonry and is invited to consider his relationship and dependence on God.

A ROYAL ARCH CHAPTER

The Royal Arch is organised into Chapters, just as the Craft is organised into Lodges. It is usual that a Chapter is attached to a Lodge having the same name and number. Most Chapters hold four meetings each year, known as Convocations. The joining and annual fees are usually less than those of Craft Masonry.

A Chapter is similar to a Lodge in that there is a progression of Officers leading towards the offices of the Three Principals who govern the Chapter. Principals have usually been through the Chair of their Lodge, although this is not an essential qualification.

There should be no pressure for a member to progress through the offices of a Chapter unless he wishes it. Most new Companions are happy to attend, learn more about Freemasonry and cultivate new friendships until after they have passed their Lodge’s Master’s Chair. However, for those who are keen to take part in the ceremonies sooner, there will be opportunities: it is up to you. Being a member is the important thing.

STRUCTURE AND ADMINISTRATION

The Supreme Order of the Holy Royal Arch is the only order officially recognised by Grand Lodge.

This should in no way put you off from joining any of the other wonderful orders of Freemasonry, but if you wish to join only one, it should be the Royal Arch.

Supreme Grand Chapter administers the Royal Arch, and its Principal Officers are always the same as those of the United Grand Lodge of England. In Worcestershire, we are led by a Grand

Superintendent, a Deputy Grand Superintendent and a Second and Third Provincial Grand Principal. Each year we have a Provincial Convocation, just as the Craft has its Provincial Grand Lodge.

Members, who are known as Companions, are easy to spot in Lodge, as they proudly wear their Royal Arch Jewels: white for a Companion, red for a Principal or Past Principal and tri-coloured for a Grand Officer or Provincial Grand Officer.

The word "Companion" is particularly relevant to the Order and implies a much closer bond between members than does "Brother". The word originates from the Latin and literally means "sharer of bread". At a time of war it encapsulates the relationship of those whose lives depend on each other in battle and implies the greatest loyalty and trust.

THE ESSENCE OF FREEMASONRY

In Craft Masonry, we learn that we should endeavour to "please each other and unite in the grand design of being happy and communicating happiness". We also learn that Freemasonry is a system of morality, founded on a belief in God and promoting Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth. The Royal Arch continues and develops this theme and enables us to reach a deeper and more rewarding understanding of all that has gone before.

The Masonic story does not end with the Third Degree. Make up your mind to join and enjoy Royal Arch Masonry, just as you do your Craft Masonry and you will come to understand why the Royal Arch is considered "The Essence of Freemasonry".

WHICH CHAPTER AND HOW TO JOIN?

There are fifty Chapters in Worcestershire, with over 1,200 Royal Arch Masons.

Some brethren choose to join a Chapter where they are well known, possibly the Chapter linked to their Lodge or at the same Masonic Centre, whilst others prefer to join a different Chapter perhaps at a different location. Whichever you choose, you will make new friends, with most Chapters being made up of Brethren from several Lodges.

The Provincial Year Book provides useful information on each Chapter. It lists its members and gives contact details for the Scribe E., who is the Chapter equivalent of the Lodge Secretary. He will welcome your call. Alternatively, you can contact your Lodge Royal Arch Representative, who will be happy to discuss anything to do with Royal Arch.

You will find the Companions a very friendly and welcoming group of people.

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