

This Paper was read at the meeting of Supreme Grand Chapter
on 13th. February 1974 by its Author

E.Comp. ARR. Hewitt, P.G.St.B.,

*approx.
(25 minutes)*

then Grand Librarian
and Curator.

"LOOKING BACK 200 YEARS."

*(TO WHICH I HAVE TAKEN THE LIBERTY OF ADDING SOME
COMMENTS OF MY OWN.)*

The year 1774 was not particularly outstanding in our annals but 200 years, although but a moment in the history of the world, is a long time in the history of the Royal Arch.

Only thirty years before had the first printed reference to the Order appeared, namely, in Dr. Fifield d'Assigny's "Serious and Impartial Enquiry etc" published in 1744.

The Order had, obviously, been in existence before that date but it is quite impossible to say how old it then was or how widespread its popularity.

In 1774 this Supreme Grand Chapter was a mere eight years old, having been established under the famous Charter of Compact by which it had power to constitute subordinate Chapters.

This power was not, however, exercised until 1769 when, in that year, eight Warrants (they were not then called Charters) were issued, five of the Chapters established thereby are, happily, still in existence; they each had a bi-centenary Charter presented in 1969.

After this burst of activity in 1769, enthusiasm seems to have abated somewhat and only one more Warrant was issued (in 1771 but which does not seem to have been acted upon) before the year now under review.

Exaltation, or 'arching', regularly took place in Grand Chapter itself which seems to have served the Metropolis as a Chapter as well as a governing body.

Brethren were also exalted in their Craft Lodges, both under the premier Grand Lodge and the Antients Grand Lodge.

But what of the ritual as the year 1774 dawned? The Grand Chapter archives throw no light on the subject. The Minutes ~~merely~~^{HEREBY} record that Brothers so-and-so were "exalted to this sublime Degree" or were "permitted to pass the Royal Arch".

In addition, it was customary to rehearse the lectures (not to be confused with the Principals' lectures so familiar to-day), the minutes recording that the 'usual sections were gone through' or the 'usual sections being ended the Chapter was closed and adjourned' or ~~some~~^{some} such wording.

Our knowledge of the ritual at that date is fragmentary and source material scanty. To-day is not the occasion (even if time permitted) to go into the subject at length but it can be briefly stated that the candidate was prepared much as for the Craft initiation, that the familiar tools were carried by the Sojourners when the candidate was received, that he was questioned by the Principals, that an obligation was required, that legend of the discovery of a secret vault was enacted, that the 'word' was communicated and that other ceremonial actions we know to-day were observed.

Much more is known, however, of the regalia of the 1760's and 1770's. The Companions wore aprons of "white leather indented round with crimson ribbon and strings of the same with a T.M. in gold properly displayed on the bib" - the second colour was not introduced until much later..

Both the indented sash and breast jewel were almost identical with those we wear to-day.

The robes of the Principals were plain; the more decorative style, designed by the Chevalier Ruspini, were adopted in 1777.

For a time the wearing of the R.A. apron ceased when, in 1773, Grand Chapter resolved that it be "disused....until the Grand Lodge shall permit the Companions of this Chapter to wear

them in Grand Lodge and in all private Free Masons' Lodges"

Grand Lodge never did so allow and it is believed the resolution was quietly ignored and the wearing of the distinctive apron resumed.

That Grand Lodge refused to allow the R.A. apron to be worn was not surprising as it did not recognise either the degree or the Grand Chapter. As far back as 1759 Grand Secretary Spencer wrote "...our society is neither Arch, Royal Arch or Ancient" and again, soon after the formation of Grand Chapter in 1766 "...the Royal Arch is a Society which we do not acknowledge and which we hold to be an invention to introduce innovation and seduce the brethren".

This official opposition, or non-recognition, which continued until the union of the Grand Lodges in 1813, did not, however, prevent many Grand Officers from being exalted in the Order.

Another distinguished Grand Secretary, James Heseltine, not only signed the Chapter of Compact but became First Grand Principal in 1773 and again in 1786!! Other contemporary distinguished brethren, members of Grand Chapter, were the Chevalier Bartholomew Ruspini, later to become First Grand Principal; James Galhaway, who was Junior Grand Warden in 1781 and First Grand Principal four years later; and John Allen, Provincial Grand Master for Lancashire (1769 - 1806), First Grand Principal 1782 and Grand Treasurer of Grand Chapter from 1794 - 1806.

Probably the most distinguished of was the celebrated Thomas Dunckerley who later became Grand Superintendent in and over no fewer than 18 Royal Arch Provinces and Provincial Grand Master for 8 Craft Provinces.

Another member of Grand Chapter at this time was Br. ~~XXXX~~ Captain George Smith, who, although he became Provincial Grand Master for Kent in 1777, ought to be described as 'notorious' rather than distinguished. Whilst in the King's Bench prison for debt in 1783 with other Masons, he held meetings of the Lodge of which he was Master actually in the prison at which he conferred degrees. He was duly called to account by the Grand Lodge. The following year the matter of a false Certificate, used by a beggar to collect alms as a distressed Mason, came before Grand Lodge. On investigation it transpired that the Certificate had been obtained from Smith who was, in consequence, summoned to appear before the Committee of Charity. He did not appear and was expelled the Craft.

In 1774 the Grand Principals were Charles Taylor, Charles Hanbury and James Bottomly, (Companions about whom very little is known but who attended the Grand Chapter with great regularity - Taylor and Bottomly attending 7 meetings out of eight and Hanbury 4 out of 8, so performing conscientiously the duties of their Offices. Curiously enough, Comp. Taylor, who had been Grand Treasurer since 1771 was requested "to continue the care of the cash" when he was elected M.E.Z., (!!) - probably the only example of dual active offices.

Let us now look more closely at the work of Grand Chapter during the year under review (1774). The first meeting was held on the 14th. January at the Mitre Tavern, Fleet Street, when two brethren "were severally permitted to pass the Royal Arch and pd. the usual fine". H.R.H. Henry Frederick, Duke of Cumberland, fourth son of the Prince of Wales, was unanimously elected Patron of the Order. The M.E.Z., Taylor, was elected ~~by~~ by ballot and the Second and Third Grand Principals were appointed as were the Sojourners and Scribes!!!

The Companions also (I quote) "voted their thanks to Br. Heseltine for his past Care and Assiduity as the late P.Z. and a New Robe was ordered to be prepared for him". (un-quote)

Four Brethren were proposed, amongst whom was Stephen Sayer, a Sheriff of the City of London. The final minute is of particular interest and reads:-

"After the Usual Solemn Procession & All other Business ended the Cr. (Chapter) was closed in ancient Form & adjourned after which the Cms (Companions) dined together & in the evening a Ball was held to celebrate the Festival of St. John at which about 70 Cms., Master Masons & Ladies were present. After which an elegant Supper was provided & the evening conducted & concluded with that Harmony and Social Mirth which has ever been the peculiar (sic) Criteria of Masons and true Citizens of the World".

The second and third meetings (held on 11th. February and 11th. March (1774)) were of a routine nature. At the fourth meeting in the year, 8th. April, Br. Smith, to whom reference has already been made, /"^(I quote)...read to the Cms. a Dissertation on the 4th. Degree of Masonry containing many Instructive & Ingenious Remarks & recd. the Unanimous Thanks of the Cr. ^{FROM} the Chair" (unquote). Capt. Smith certainly showed ingenuity in his later activities as we have already seen.

The most significant business of the evening, however, was communicated by Br. Heseltine, the immediate Past M.E.Z. (I quote) He "read some Despatches recd. by him from Bengal setting forth the great Desire of Som (sic) Brors. thereto have a R.A.C. (sic. - presumably = Royal Arch Chapter) and showing the Difficulties they labour under for want of a proper number of resident Cms. to receive such authority" (un-quote) A Committee was thereupon appointed to consider the despatches and to prepare an answer. Presumably, the Companions appointed went into Committee immediately because the minutes go

on to record a Resolution (I quote) "...that a Patent be granted to Br. Durham of Bengal & any or (other) 2 regular Brors. he may know there to be R.A. Masons". And so the first overseas CHARTER was granted - it was numbered 10 and dated 8th. April 1774. Unfortunately. the Chapter seems never to have functioned, as nothing more is heard of it.

On the 13th. May (1774) Capt. Smith again played a part - he (I quote) "...read to the Gms. a Dissertation in praise of Masonry"

At the October meeting the Introductory lecture was delivered, apparently taking no longer than usual as (I quote) "...the Gms. not having time to go thro' the Sections they were postponed" (un-quote). The minutes also disclose a delicate approach to affairs of the day in that it was ordered (I quote) "... a genteel Lr. (letter) be wrote by E.(Ezra) & sent to Br. Martin desiring him to app. (appoint) some Evening previous to the next Cr. (Chapter Night) to meet Br. Taylor & Br. Rich to settle the Accts. relative to the last Anniversary".

On the 11th. November a Brother John Palmer, junior, a Merchant of St. James Parish, Montigo Bay, Jamaica, was proposed, balloted for, approved and (I quote) "...permitted to pass the Arch this evening" (un-quote) on account of his going abroad before the next meeting. A further minute is worthy of note in that it was ordered that Certificates be prepared for the said Br. Palmer and one other, - the first recorded reference to Grand Chapter Certificates.

The final meeting of the year, held on 9th. December (1774) but is of little interest other than that two more brethren were exalted.

So ended one years work of the Grand Chapter. There had been eight meetings, at which the average attendance was 16, and one Committee of Accounts. The Grand Principals and other

Officers had been elected and a Royal Grand Patron appointed.

Fourteen brethren had been exalted and one new Chapter authorised. The lectures were rehearsed on two occasions and two papers read.

I trust, Companions, that this brief review of what our forefathers were doing 200 years ago has been of some interest.

That ends Comp. Hewitt's Paper but I would like to add one or two observations of my own. Thus, from this very brief and sketchy account one cannot but avoid forming the opinion that Grand Chapter of 200 years ago was a very slipshod and loose organisation when compared with Supreme Grand Chapter of 1979. A lot of things have been tidied up for, as an example, the Order is now governed by Supreme Grand Chapter Regulations and the (Craft) Book of Constitutions.

A brother now enters the Holy Royal Arch through an exaltation ceremony carried out in a private R.A. Chapter, not in Grand Chapter *or a Craft Lodge.*

The 'arching' ceremony, as our forebears called it, being performed in Grand Chapter is reminiscent of the Craft practice in the 1720's of conferring the 2nd. and, later, 3rd. Degrees in Grand Lodge on candidates (i.e. E.A's.) from private Lodges. Nevertheless, 'arching' was also carried out in private Lodges and Chapters in both the "Moderns" and "Antients" Jurisdictions - more so in the "Antients" Lodges.

In the early days the "Moderns" (or Premier) Grand Lodge soon found ~~XXX~~ that the multitude of matters that cropped up for attention at each Quarterly Communication was such that many had to be referred to the Committee of Charity which body was required to report back at the next Quarterly Communication or as soon as possible after.

Later on the "Antients" used their ^{Grand} Stewards Lodge for the same purpose. These two bodies were the forerunners of to-day's Board of General Purposes.

Comp. Capt. Smith's "Dissertation on the 4th. Degree of Masonry" was completely nullified 40 years later by the publication of a revised Book of Constitutions after the Union of the two (up to then) rival Grand Lodges which declared that pure Ancient Masonry consisted of three Degreesincluding ^{Supreme Order of} the Holy Royal Arch.

It may not have escaped your notice that the average attendance of Grand Officers and Principals of private Chapters for the year 1774 was stated to have been 16. Attendances at Grand Chapter these days is generally around 200 to 1000. But the discrepancy is really not so remarkable on reflection for, due to poor roads and indifferent transport facilities few, if any, Provincial (or 'Country') Companions were able to put in an appearance and (even more to the point) the number of R.A. private Chapters was very much less than to-day.

This brief peep into Royal Arch affairs of just over 200 years ago should kindle in us, as Royal Arch Masons, a feeling of great gratitude and ample satisfaction to those Companions who presided over the amalgamation of the two Jurisdictions in the years 1813 to 1817. Remember, that the meetings of Grand Chapter in the 1774 were held in a little room over the bar of the Mitre Tavern, Fleet Street, London, and briefly referred to in this sketch. From that humble beginning has blossomed forth the organisation to which we are all proud to owe allegiance viz: the Supreme Grand Chapter of England - the Mother Grand Chapter of the World.

King's Beath Holy Royal Arch Chapter, No. 3863.

Doseley Masonic Hall, Alcester Road South, Kings Beath,
Birmingham 14.

Phone: 021-444 3487

27. Bardons Road,
Bearwood,
Wolverley,
West Midlands

22nd February 1979

6. Widney Lane
Solithull
West Midlands
B91 3LS.

Dear. E. Comp. St. George

Thank you on behalf
of the Chapter for offering to present a paper at our
next Convocation on Wednesday 21st March 1979.

I will send you a summons for the meeting
in due course.

Yours sincerely and fraternally,

J. Williams

24 FEB 1979

Seibe E.

These emblems are the same as those worn by the corresponding officers of the Grand Chapter except that in the case of Provincial or District Grand Stewards, Present and Past, the emblem of office shall be a cornucopia.

The jewel of office shall be not more than three inches in diameter in the case of a Present Provincial or District Grand Officer and not more than two inches in diameter in the case of a Past Provincial or District Grand Officer."

The M.E. ACTING FIRST GRAND PRINCIPAL: Companions, E. Comp. A. R. Hewitt, P.G.St.B., is kindly going to give us a short address entitled "Looking back 200 years". I call on Comp. Hewitt.

LOOKING BACK 200 YEARS

By E. Comp. A. R. Hewitt, P.G.St.B.

M.E. ACTING FIRST GRAND PRINCIPAL AND COMPANIONS.

The year 1774 was not particularly outstanding in our annals but 200 years, although but a moment in the history of the world, is a long time in the history of the Royal Arch. Only thirty years before had the first printed reference to the Order appeared, namely, in Dr. Nifield d'Asaigny's *Serious and Impartial Enquiry*, etc. published in 1744. The Order had, obviously, been in existence before that date but it is quite impossible to say how old it then was or how widespread its popularity.

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*Read by the
Antients - feel the
meaning of Supreme G.
Charles J. G.
13th Dec. 1974*

when the candidate was received, that he was questioned by the Principals, that an obligation was required, that a legend of the discovery of a secret vault was enacted, that the 'word' was communicated and that other ceremonial actions we know to-day were observed.

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I trust, Companions, that this brief review of what our forefathers were doing 200 years ago has been of some interest.

The M.E. ACTING FIRST GRAND PRINCIPAL: Thank you very much, E. Comp. Hewitt, for your most interesting and informative address. We are most grateful.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE M.E. ACTING FIRST GRAND PRINCIPAL.

APPOINTMENT OF GRAND SUPERINTENDENTS.

The M.E. ACTING FIRST GRAND PRINCIPAL: Companions, I come to the announcements.

Since the last Regular Convocation the M.E. The First Grand Principal has made the following appointments:—

- E. Comp. David N. Rockwood, P.G.St.B., to be Grand Superintendent in and over Sri Lanka;
- E. Comp. Robert W. Elliott, P.A.G.D.C., to be Grand Superintendent in and over Suffolk;
- E. Comp. Sir Lionel Brett, P.G.Supt., Nigeria, to be Grand Superintendent in and over Somerset; and
- E. Comp. Kenneth L. Rowland to be Grand Superintendent in and over South America, Northern Division.

Grand Chapter was closed in Antient and Solemn form.

At the close of the proceedings the first verse of the National Anthem was sung.