

ROYAL ARCH MASONRY IN WORCESTERSHIRE

By the solem Act of the Union between the two Grand Lodges of Freemasonry in December, 1813, it was "Declared and P^ronounced that pure Antient Masonry consists of the three Degrees and no more, eg. those of an Entered Apprentice, the Fellowcraft and the Master Mason, including the Supreme Order of the Holy Royal Arch!"

'Antient' is here spelt with a 'c' to prevent confusion with the "Antients", but we must admit forthwith that, but for our Antient Brethren of the 18th century to whom the Royal Arch was "The root, heart and marrow of Masonry", Royal Arch Masonry even if we had it in England today as an officially recognised rite, a point open to some doubt - might be something less than the cornerstone of our order.

There are many references to the Royal Arch being worked from the 1740s in Ireland and Scotland. There is no doubt however, that by 1760 rudimentary Royal Arch Ceremonies were being worked throughout English, Irish, Scottish and American Freemasonry.

Lawrence Dermott, Secretary of the Antients Grand Lodge says he was made a Royal Arch Mason in 1752. Thomas Dunkerley comes prominently into early History of Royal Arch (in the Moderns Grand Lodge) in a letter he states he was made a Royal Arch Mason in 1754 (probably a Royal Arch attached to his mother Lodge in Portsmouth). He was one of the few who helped to keep the Grand Chapter of the Moderns in Working Order.

The Royal Arch was practised in the "Antients Lodge" and all came under the jurisdiction of their Grand Lodge.

Though the "Moderns" Grand Lodge officially disowned the Royal Arch, many of their Lodges worked it and a number of prominent members were Royal Arch Masons.

The "Antients" regarded the Royal Arch as a degree for Masters in the Chair and Past Masters.

The first Grand Chapter in the World was constituted in 1766 by Lord Blayney, Grand Master of the Premier Grand Lodge (Moderns), the Charter of Compact being signed on 17th July, 1766.

In June 1766 Lord Blayney was exalted into the Caledonian Chapter, he immediately became "First Principal" of the Chapter and Grand Master of the Royal Arch.

At the Union of the two Grand Lodges the number of "Moderns" Chapters in existence far exceeded those of the "Antients".

Though Worcestershire was a joint Province with Glos. Salop, Mons and Herefordshire under Sir Robert de Cornwall in 1753, at that period we had only one Lodge in existence No.119 which met at the Talbot in Stourbridge, warranted in 1733.

By the Union in 1813, there had been in the Province "Five Atholl Lodges" ("Antients") and "Four Moderns Lodges". The only survivors of this period being Harmonic No.457 now 252 and Worcester No.574 now 280.

There is now record of any of these Lodges working Royal Arch until 1808, when we find that during the second year in the chair of W. Bro. J. Allen, W.M. of the Worcester Lodge, the first Royal Arch Chapter was opened, which, although possessing no ritual or appointments as its more legitimate and more favourable successor, doubtless had its interest. Confirmed (as was not infrequent at this period) in the Lodge. Brother Allen seems to have given much time and talent in prosecution of the Royal Arch, and to have Exalted many members.

How long the working of Royal Arch continued, we have no information, possibly the death of the originator occurring in May 1813, or the promulgation of the Laws of the Supreme Grand Chapter soon afterwards may account for its extinction.

The Records of the Worcester Lodge extant have but one reference to it, which occurs in the minutes of a Regular Lodge held on February 7th, 1808, when it was resolved, "That Bro. John Dent be paid the sum of £27, balance of account due to him, which he paid to Widow Allen in 1819 for a Regalia for Royal Arch Chapter, which is now deposited at the Rain Deer Inn, and is to become the property of the Lodge, and which sum was promised to the late Bro. Allen, and many members of the Lodge having been Exalted by him.

Nothing further was heard of the Royal Arch Regalia until 1860's when the remains of the regalia were rescued from the Auctioneers Hammer, and restored to the members of the present Chapter. These items have now for years been in the possession of the Library and Museum.

No more was heard of the working of Royal Arch until we find in the minutes of Harmonic Lodge No.513 now 252 on the 7th May, 1844 of a Committee being formed to enquire into the costs of a Royal Arch Chapter. On July 13th, 1844, a petition was drawn up for submission to Grand Chapter as follows:-

John Window Harris	Z	of St. Peters Chapter No.607
John Shedden	H	of Chapter of Fortitude No.51
James Morris	J	of Chapter of Fortitude No.51.

The warrant was dated 7th August, 1844, and the Consecration took place on the 15th December, 1844, at the Swann Inn, Dudley. Immediately after the Consecration, Bro. William Masfield, and five other Brethren were proposed, balloted for and then Exalted. They were then appointed Officers of the Chapter.

At the same period we find that Nine petitioners from the Worcester Lodge No. 349 (280) who desired to hold a Chapter for "The cultivation of this Grand and universal science" were granted a Charter.

This Charter having been authorised, the first Convocation was held on the 9th December, 1844, when six of the petitioners proceeded to business.

Ten Brethren were proposed for exaltation and five as joining members. As several of these were from their own Lodge it has been assumed that they were members exalted during the Mastership of Bro. Allen, but there is no record of this.

On the 18th December, 1844, the Chapter was consecrated, and the first Three Principals (although members of the Worcester Lodge) had been exalted into the "Chapter of Fortitude No. 348, Leicester.

E. Comp. J. Bennett	Fortitude No. 348
E. Comp. J. Knight	Fortitude No. 348
E. Comp. Robert Rising	Fortitude No. 348

No connection has as yet been found as to why these Brethren of 280 went to Leicester to be exalted, they were all initiated into the 280 Lodge. However we do find that one Companion was a dealer in Lace, the other was a solicitor and the third was Governor of the Gaol.

Joseph Bennett was 1st Principal until 1848 after a dispensation had been obtained for him to take the First Principals Chair for the fourth time. A further dispensation was refused, and the Chapter was dormant until 1858, when Joseph Bennett was again elected to the 1st Principals Chair and the Chapter was revived. It is said that the Chapter failed for the want of Brethren who were qualified to take the Principals Chairs, and from lack of Exaltees, as we must remember at this period the qualification for membership was a Master Mason for 12 months. In the May Convocation of Supreme Grand Chapter in 1858, Clause 20 (in a proposition) was altered from 12 months to four weeks. The Chapters felt very strongly about the reduction of the qualification time, and deputations were sent to London with expenses paid by both the Chapters in the Province.

To make Companions attend the meetings, the Chapter of Dudley 252 imposed the following fines for absence:— Principals 2s and Officers 1s.

In 1876 we find recorded in the minutes of the Chapter of Dudley, that any Companion not being present shall forfeit Five shillings to the fund of the Chapter.

We find that two further Chapters Consecrated:—

1854 Royal Standard Chapter No. 730 (498)

1871 Hope and Charity Chapter No. 377

4 CHAP. 10 LODGES

We now refer to the minutes of the Chapter of Dudley, for the 20th January, 1880, on this day we find that Comp. G.P. Chapman was Installed as M.E.Z. On 7th April, of the same year a Chapter of emergency was held, when Companion Sir Edmund Anthony Harley Lechmere Bart., M.P., F.S.A. etc. (Provincial Grand Master, in and over the Province of Worcestershire) of the Alfred Chapter, Oxford, was balloted for and elected a joining member of the Chapter. At the same meeting it was stated that "E. Comp. G.P. Chapman, M.E.Z., had resigned the Office of M.E.Z. Comp. Lechmere was proposed, balloted for and elected to fill the Office of M.E.Z.

On the 20th April of the same year, the following Dispensation was read and

Companion Lechmere Installed as M.E.Z. of the Chapter.

To the Principals and Companions of the Chapter of Dudley No.252.

You having represented to the M.E. and Supreme Grand Z of the Order of Royal Arch Masons of England that you are desirous of placing in the First Chair of your Chapter the E. Companion Sir Edmund Anthony Harley Lechmere, Bart., M.P., F.S.A., etc. etc. of Rydd Court, Worcestershire, who has not served the Office of Second or Third Principal or that of Scribe or Sojourner but who is otherwise duly qualified and request a dispensation for the purpose. The M.E. The First Grand Principal has taken the subject into mature consideration and is pleased to accede to your request. You are therefore authorised and empowered to Install the said E. Comp. Sir Edmund Anthony Harley Lechmere into the First Principals Chair of your Chapter previously passing him thro. the Third and Second Chairs provided he shall have been duly elected in conformity with the General Laws of the Order and the By-Laws of your own Chapter but not otherwise.

It would appear that there was an error in the Dispensation is giving Sir Edmund Lechmere's rank as E. Comp. when he was not qualified for the same.

It would also appear that E. Comp. Chapman resigned to allow Sir Edmund Lechmere to qualify in the oldest Chapter of the Province for the Office of Grand Superintendent, for we find that on 21st September 1880, Sir Edmund Anthony Harley Lechmere was Installed Grand Superintendent in and over the Province of Worcestershire, when the Provincial Grand Chapter was held under the Banner of St. Wulstans Chapter No. 280 at Worcester in the Guild Hall.

St. Wulstans Chapter was opened by the Principals, and the Grand Officers and Companions were admitted. E. Comp. Col. Shadwell H. Clerke, G.S.E. of England as Z; W.K.F. Bedford, P.A.G.Soj. (Eng) H; and E. Comp. Masefield as J.

The patent was read, and E. Comp. Sir Edmund Anthony Harley Lechmere was escorted into the Chapter by E. Comp. M. Dennison 252 and E. Comp. W.H. Jones 498, proceeded by E. Comp. W. Bristow acting Director of Ceremonies.

It was proposed that E. Comp. Albert Brown, 280 Chapter be Provincial Treasurer. The following Officers were then appointed and invested:-

S.E.	W. Bristow	252
S.N.	J. Fitzgerald	377
P.S.	W.H. Jones	498
1st.A.S.	C.F. Pidock	280
2nd.A.S.	H. Cross	280
Swd.Br.	J.W.Grosvernor	377
St.Br.	W.H. Westwood	498
D.C.	G.J. Westbury	252
Org.	T. Troman	252
Janitor	J. Smith	280

Until 1889 the Provincial Grand Chapter Convocations were held Bianually, when they changed to Annual Convocations. By 1892 the number of Companions attending Provincial Grand Chapter had fallen off, and it was suggested that the Provincial Chapter Convocation might go back to bi-yearly meetings. The question was left open for discussion, and nothing further was proposed, however, the message was put over to the Companions for at the meeting held in 1893 the attendance rose to 42.

At the second Convocation of the Chapter in 1882, the committee formed to prepare the By-Laws of Provincial Grand Chapter, presented the same which were approved.

On the death of Comp. Buck, it is reported in the minutes that (the accounts not audited). Balance brought forward £45.10 (1880-1887). It would appear that the Treasurer's book commenced in 1883, and up to that date no trace could be found of any treasurers accounts between 1880 - 1887. It was also reported in 1889, that some of the Officers Collars and Jewels were lost and could not be found. The Prov. Grand Treasurer was authorised to purchase new Jewels and collars, and to purchase a book to record the issue of Collars and Jewels to be called the Jewel Book. In 1894 it is noted that Collars and Jewels of absent Companions appointed to Provincial Grand Chapter Rank, were collected on their behalf by other Companions present.

During the period that Sir Edmund Lechmere was Grand Superintendent 1880 - 1894 only one new Chapter was consecrated, that of Semper Fidelis No. 529, of which he became a joining member after the Consecration.

A special Provincial Grand Chapter Convocation was held at Worcester on the 3rd January, 1895. The purpose of this Convocation was to pass a vote of condolence to Lady Lechmere and Family on the death of Sir Edmund Lechmere.

On the 19th November, 1895, E. Comp. A.F. Godson, was Installed as Grand Superintendent in and over the Province of Worcestershire, he died in 1906, and during this period he consecrated three Chapters.

1897 Godson Chapter No. 2385

1897 Wasefield Chapter No. 2034

7 CHAR. 16 LODGES

1905. Perseverance Chapter No. 573

On the 19th November, 1895, E. Comp. A.F. Godson, G. Superintendent Designate spoke of the proposed memorial Brass to be placed in Worcester Cathedral in Loving Memory of our late Grand Superintendent, and proposed that a sum of £50 be given by Provincial Grand Chapter for this purpose. Unfortunately the Dean and Chapter could not see their way clear to have this memorial brass in the Cathedral.

In 1909, General Sir. William Campbell was Installed as Provincial Grand Superintendent, he died in 1917. During his period of Office no Chapters were

Consecrated.

In 1918, the following Chapters were Consecrated:-

October 1918	Campbell Chapter No. 3643	
November 1918	Lechmere Hughes Chapter No. 1874	<i>9448</i>

In 1919, E. Comp. W.T. Page was Installed as Grand Superintendent, he died in 1933 and during this period five Chapters were consecrated.

December 1919	Arter Chapter	
January 1920	Abbott Lichfield Chapter	
June 1920	Kings Heath Chapter	<i>111</i>
August 1920	Page Chapter	<i>111</i>
September 1929	Stechford Chapter	<i>111</i>

We find that in the minutes of 28th May 1919, The making of returns by each Chapter in the Province was considered, and for the first time we find that during the year the Provincial Grand Superintendent attending most of the Chapters in the Province. It would seem that Transport was improving, as prior to this date there was very little visiting by the Grand Superintendent.

At the Provincial Convocation of the 27th August 1920, we find that for the first time a copy of the Provincial Summons giving (in numbered items) the order of the Consecration Ceremony attached to the Provincial Grand Scribe E. Minutes, it was the same as that in use in 1975. The previous minutes do not mention any 'Oration' by the Provincial 'J' at the consecrations.

It is also interesting to note that by 1920 there were 500 R.A. Masons in the Province.

In 1924 it was announced that Grand Chapter had sanctioned that more than one Steward could be appointed by each Chapter.

In 1934 E. Comp. S.S. Sommers was Installed as Provincial Grand Superintendent, he died in 1954, and during his period of office the following Chapters were Consecrated.

February 1934	Royds Chapter	
January 1934	Bromsgrove Chapter	<i>15 CHAP.</i>
November 1944	St. Egburgha	<i>45 LODGES</i>
February 1945	Mosaic Chapter	
May 1951	Bordesley Abbey	

In 1955, on the 14th April, E. Comp. G.E. Grosvenor was Installed Provincial Grand Superintendent, he died in 1963. During his period of office only two Chapters were consecrated.

Lapal Chapter	<i>20 CHAP</i>
Wigornia Chapter	<i>96 LODGES</i>

In 1963 our ^{*Part*} present Grand Superintendent, E. Comp. F.H. Griffiths, O.St.J.,

was Installed, and to date he has consecrated no less than twenty Chapters, thus doubling up the number of Royal Arch Chapters in the Province. This development of the Royal Arch owes a great deal to the leadership and enthusiasm for the Royal Arch Masonry. During this period we find the introduction at the discretion of the Grand Superintendent of a Deputy Grand Superintendent, and the Province were delighted when E. Comp. L.B. Heynes, M.M., P.A.G. Soj. was appointed to that Office. At the Provincial Convocation held on 6th April, 1970, E. Comp. L.B. Heynes, presented to Provincial Grand Chapter a set of Principal Robes, this was only the second occasion on which this had been done. The previous occasion being the 7th June, 1929, when the M.E. Grand Superintendent, E. Comp. W.T. Page presented to the Province the first set of Principals Robes. Since the Installation of our M.E. Grand Superintendent on the 2nd July, 1963 by the First Grand Principal the Rt. Hon. The Earl of Scarborough, K.G. the following Chapters have been consecrated.

14th November, 1964	Vernon Chapter
29th September, 1965	Northfield Chapter
30th November, 1966	Almacantar Chapter
16th January, 1967	St. Thomas Chapter
30th November, 1967	Woodlands Chapter
23rd January, 1968	Weatherock Chapter
20th June, 1968	Wyche Chapter
8th January, 1969	Kings Norton
14th December, 1971	St. George Chapter
20th April, 1972	Brandwood Chapter
11th May, 1972	Ben Marsh Chapter
29th March, 1973	Red Rose Chapter
29th March, 1974	Meriton Culy Chapter
29th January, 1976	Victory Chapter
28th June, 1976	Holy Wells Chapter
29th September, 1976	Trinity Chapter
7th July, 1978	Severn Chapter
29th November, 1978	Avon Chapter
26th June, 1979	Breme Chapter
January, 1980	Sabrina Chapter

REMEMBRANCE 9.6.80
 ST. MICHAEL 19.2.82
 W.I. FIRST PRINCIPALS. JUNE 1984

This year we see the Centenary Convocation of Provincial Grand Chapter, which will be celebrated at the Provincial Convocation to be held on Saturday 12th April, 1980, at Birmingham University. It is also unique that our M.E. Grand Superintendent who will be presiding over this great occasion, presided as M.E.Z. on the occasion of the Centenary celebration of the oldest Chapter in the Province, the Chapter of Dudley, on 13th December, 1944. Over the 100 years this Province has gone from a small unit of four Chapters to 40, with a corresponding increase in the number of Companions in the Province.

There have been many changes since the 21st September, 1880, when some 40 Companions attended the Installation of the Grand Superintendent, and today we see our attendances attaining 291 Companions. Let us hope that on this great occasion on the 12th April, 1980 will see record number of Companions present for this celebration.

Acknowledgements

Royal Arch Bernard Jones

History of the Chapter of Dudley

History of St. Wulstans Chapter

Historical notes on the Province of Worcestershire extracted from the Provincial Grand Chapter Minutes by E. Comp. R.G. St. George, P.P.G. Soj., E. Comp. T.W. Grounsell, P.P.A.G.S.E.

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