



Reviewed 08/02/20

The Building of a Chapter A Joint Convocation

NOTES

MUSIC is shaded blue

SPEAKERS and **READERS** are highlighted in yellow

SLIDES are shaded green

Instructions are in red italics

Spoken text is in black

Open the Chapter without banners or ensigns.

The pedestal and Triple Tau banner should be in place.

Complete Chapter business (quickly!).

Scribe E, Scribe N, Z, H and J and sojourners remain in their normal place.

Admit the senior guests and welcome.

Slide show operative starts with SLIDE 1 [BLANK SCREEN]

Speaker 1 - Introduction

Companions, Joint Convocations have been introduced in the Royal Arch as a way of engendering a team ethic, as well as generally improving its profile. The RA cabinet has been working on an electronic toolbox where items such as this presentation can be stored and downloaded for use by other chapters and can be adapted alongside those stored in Solomon.

This presentation is entitled “The Building of the Chapter” and was initially developed by EComp Frank Davies based on his research. It is intended for exaltees and past principals alike.

You will notice that, it being a joint convocation, we have members of all our chapters in the Widnes Group taking part namely the Chapter of Equity No. 1384; Widnes Chapter No. 2819: Bold & St Paul’s Chapter No.5459, who are kindly hosting this event and Kingsway Chapter No 7870. I am very grateful to all those who have had any input into the making of this evening.

We shall now prepare the room.

TAKE OUT THE VEILED PEDESTAL

Lights are then extinguished, except for a pin spotlight (JOHN GIBBON TO ILLUMINATE) from behind the Sojourners, which is directed at a place where the pedestal will be positioned later.

Speaker 2 ***steps up and delivers the Opening address.***

Companions, we again assemble together with those feelings of affection and goodwill which animate the meeting of friends who have been for some time separated.

After this interval, you have I trust, acquired an increased relish for the interesting exercises of this retreat and you undoubtedly return with new alacrity to your labours.

And now, Companions, we meet with closed doors, the busy world shut out with all its perplexities, cares and sorrows, none of which are suffered to intrude upon our happy privacy, for here, nothing should enter but innocent pleasures, quiet joys and Fraternal gaieties.

Here, you are invited to excel in the True, the Good and the Just and to enjoy the bright auspices and emanations of that glorious light, which sheds around you the clearest and most cheering rays.

Here, your understanding may be delighted with wisdom and your hearts warmed with benevolence.

Companions you are not in Darkness therefore walk as the children of Light. Observe the strictest decorum, carefully attend to every instruction offered and readily comply with every requisition enjoined.

Be diligent in the duties of your respective stations and all the joys of unity and peace will prevail.

The Order we profess is of the highest dignity and honour – it being the summit of perfection of all Freemasonry.

It impresses on the mind a belief in the existence of a Deity who is without beginning of days or ending of years and reminds us of the reverence due to His, holy name.

If everything Wise, Virtuous and Praiseworthy were united, the result would produce Royal Arch Masonry.

Its aim is the promotion of virtue and its solemn business the communication of the Holy Name of the Great Awful Being who alone can exalt us to joys imperishable in their nature and eternal in their duration.

Reader 1 –

Companions, **this darkness** represents the state of Royal Arch Masonry in the mid-18th century when its ceremonies began to be carried out and gradually made progress. The oldest preserved Minutes of a Royal Arch

Chapter in England are dated 1762 and belonged to (the now erased) Lodge No. 259 in York.

PAUSE until a very slow fade in of the triple tau (slide1), to mimic the gradual growth of the Royal Arch, completes.

SLIDE 1 [TRIPLE TAU]



SLIDE 2 [TIMELINE]



You will be aware that there were two Grand Lodges each with a different reaction to the Royal Arch – the Moderns were indifferent and allowed it to continue as long as it was considered a separate order, whereas the Ancients regarded it as a “fourth degree” and promoted it enthusiastically.

The Royal Arch is known to have been practised in Prescott in 1803.

But, why an arch?

SLIDE 3 [CATENARIAN ARCH]



From the impenetrable nature of this, the strongest of all architectural forms, we learn to guard our mysteries.

The form of a Royal Arch Chapter can also be seen as reflecting the arched shape of the Vaulted Shrine in which the sacred name was deposited.

Symbolically, it also strongly typifies the social order and fraternal spirit of union which underpins the whole constitution of Freemasonry, thereby enabling it to survive and resist the destroying hand of time.



SLIDE 4 [STONE ARCH]

Later, Companions, you will see how a Catenarian arch is *figuratively* formed in the Chapter.

Switch Base Light on

This light represents the sun's rays which illuminated the interior of the Vault.

MUSIC - *Albinoni – Adagio in G minor*

Two Companions slowly bring in pedestal covered with the veil and position it in the lit base



SLIDE 5 [LOWERING OF THE SOJOURNER]

When the Sojourner was lowered down for the second time to see what he perceived to be this block of white marble

... .. he found it was wrought in the form of a double cube on which were engraved the initials of the three Grand Masters who presided over the building of the former temple.

SLIDE 6 [THE PEDESTAL]



Reader 2 –

The pedestal sits upon a chequered pavement which is identical to that in a craft lodge indicating one of the clear links between craft masonry and the Royal Arch.

In some chapters, the black and white segments form a concave pattern, such as that in Hope Street Masonic Hall.



SLIDE 7 [EGYPTIAN ROOM]

The Sojourner noted that the pedestal was covered by a veil,

Companion removes veil

... .. which when removed, revealed, engraved on a plate of gold, certain letters arranged to form a name. He perceived it to be the sacred and incomprehensible name of the Most High.

Turn on room lights nearest to Principals.

In Royal Arch Masonry, we acknowledge six lights – three greater and three lesser ...

During MUSIC – Pachelbel - Canon

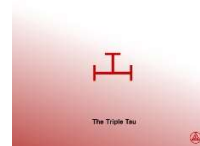
Bring in three large candlesticks and three smaller candlesticks – arrange these in the equilateral triangle form around the pedestal. Light them.



SLIDE 8 [THE SIX LIGHTS]

These lights are arranged in equilateral triangles, each of the lesser bisecting a line formed by two of the greater, thus geometrically dividing the greater triangle into three lesser triangles at its extremities and forming a fourth in the centre, all equal and equilateral.

This symbolic arrangement of angles corresponds to the Triple Tau (***points to it on the banner***) ... as follows. The four equilateral triangles have a combined total of 720 degrees (12 x 60) and the Triple Tau has 8 right angles which also makes 720 degrees (8 x 90).



SLIDE 9 [TRIPLE TAU]

... .. and it also serves to illustrate the jewel worn by the Companions. To discover more about this, you will need to read the explanation of the Royal Arch Jewel. The three lesser lights represent the Law and the Prophets. The three greater lights allude to the Sacred Name itself and the powers of creation, preservation and annihilation.

You will note that here the six lights are arranged around the pedestal. In some Chapters they are arranged to the East of the pedestal. However, in some rituals, the Aldersgate for example, the lights are arranged as shown.

Reader 3 –

The Bible, Square & Compasses are the appropriate emblems of the three Grand Masters who presided over the building of the former Temple.

Bring in Bible, Square & Compasses.



SLIDE 10 [BIBLE etc]

The Bible noting the wisdom of King Solomon, the Square the strength of King Hiram of Tyre and the Compasses the exquisite skill and workmanship of Hiram Abiff.

However, the truly speculative Mason ever regards them as the unerring standard of the Wisdom, Truth and Justice of the Most High.

Bring in “instruments of labour”

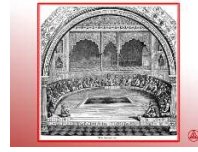
The shovel, pick and crow, are the instruments of labour used by the Sojourners to clear the ground and which led to their discovery of the Royal Arch. However, when these instruments are considered working tools, they ***pick*** roots out from our minds all evil thoughts, the ***shovel*** clears from our minds the rubbish of passions and prejudice and the ***crow*** raises our desires above the interests of this life, the better to prepare us for the search after knowledge and the reception of truth and religion.

Bring in sword and trowel

The sword and trowel remind us that the Israelites worked with ***trowel*** in hand but with ***sword*** nearby, ever ready to defend the City and Temple from the unprovoked attacks of their aggressors, reminding us that determined resistance to lawless violence is a social duty.

Bring in staves.

SLIDE 11 [SANHEDRIN]



The staves are a badge of office borne by the members of the Sanhedrin. Only 72 members could attend and carry their staff – any extra attendees being denied the voting power the staff gave them.

Reader 4 –

It is important to remember that the twelve tribes that made up the Israelitish nation comprised some five hundred thousand people and as each man was a warrior

MUSIC: *Dance of the Knights begins. Speak over the music!*

... .. as well as an artisan, they would have made a formidable fighting force, especially as they marched under their banners and ensigns which you can see displayed in this pictorial representation. When they were on the march, they did so in a column as shown.



SLIDE 12 [ON THE MARCH]

WAIT TILL MUSIC STOPS



SLIDE 13 [ENCAMPED]

MUSIC continues with a quieter section of that above

However, when they were encamped for the night, they arranged themselves in a defensive square around their most prized possession – the Sacred Tabernacle in which was deposited the Ark of the Covenant containing the scrolls of Jewish law.

SLIDE 14 [THE TABERNACLE]



Here is an artist's impression of the Tabernacle.

SLIDE 15 [BANNERS AND ENSIGNS 1]



Arranging themselves in groups of three allowed them to protect all four sides of the Tabernacle.

Each tribe bore an individual banner or ensign, but the main tribe in each group also carried a larger banner which would act as a rallying point when under attack. Here they are in a Chapter room:

SLIDE 16 [BANNERS AND ENSIGNS 2]



When the banner is named, the C offers it to a colleague [Paul Brunskill] who hands it to David Hickman who hangs it appropriately.

Reader 5 –

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[The first group of banner/ensign bearers will enter from behind the screen on hearing the first words below]

The task of guarding the **East** front entrance of the Tabernacle was given to the chief tribe of Judah. Their main banner is bright red in colour and portrays a Lion. Thus, the three tribes stationed in the east were Judah, Issachar and Zebulun. ***[Wait until they are in position, then continue with the next reading below.]***

In the **South**, the tribes of Reuben, Simeon and Gad under the main banner of Reuben, a Man. ***[Wait until they are in position, then continue with the next reading below.]***

On the **North** side, the tribes of Dan, Asher and Naphtali under the main banner of Dan, bearing an Eagle. ***[Wait until they are in position, then continue with the next reading below.]***

Stationed in the **West** were the tribes of Ephraim whose main banner was green and bore an Ox. Thus, in the West were the tribes of Ephraim,

Manasseh and Benjamin. *[Wait until they are in position, then continue with the next reading below.]*

In a Chapter the main banners are always arranged in a particular order and are always positioned behind the Principals' chairs. This arrangement does vary, but in this Chapter on the left (*point to banner*) is the Ox, next to it the Man, in the middle is the Triple Tau - the distinguishing sign of RA Masonry and next comes the Lion and finally the Eagle.

The banners also figure in the Arms of the United Grand Lodge of England.



SLIDE 18 [UGLE ARMS]

With the tribes arranged as you now see them, you will recognise that the Principals, cannot easily see the Sojourners and so, for convenience, we ask the tribes in the East to position themselves in the North and South and similarly, the tribes in the West will do likewise.

Companions in East move into position – Judah to NE corner, Issachar & Zebulun to SE.

Ephraim moves from west to SW corner, Manasseh & Benjamin to NW. Wait until they are in position.

The crimson or bright red ensign of **Judah**, *[Slide]* being the chief tribe, bears the emblem of a lion couchant surmounted by a Crown & Sceptre.

Companion places ensign into holder as name and description is announced. When done continue

... .. The sky-blue ensign of Issachar *[Slide]* features a strong ass crouching beneath its burden.

Companion places ensign into holder as name and description is announced. When done continue

The purple ensign of Zebulun *[Slide]* bears a ship for he shall be the haven for ships.

Companion places ensign into holder as name and description is announced. When done continue

The ensign of Reuben *[Slide]* is red and bears a cherubic figure; *[Pause as before]* that of Simeon *[Slide]* is yellow and is emblazoned by a sword; *[Pause as before]* whilst that of Gad *[Slide]* is white and is decorated by a troop of horsemen. *(Pause as before)*

The ensign of Ephraim *[Slide]* is green and shows an ox. *(Pause as before)* That of Manasseh *[Slide]* is flesh coloured with luxuriant vine *(Pause as before)*

and the ensign for Benjamin *[Slide]* is green with a wolf. *(Pause)*

The ensign of Dan *[Slide]* is green and bears a mounted horseman, *(Pause)* Now the blue ensign of Asher *[Slide]*. It has a jug and goblets of olive oil symbolising good food and prosperity *(Pause)* and lastly Naphtali *[Slide]* – a blue ensign designated by a hind. *(Pause)*

Companions, you will notice that in addition to being a decorative rallying point for the tribes, the pole holding the ensign would normally be mounted by a spear point and would have been used as such in a battle.

Companion Banner and ensign bearers please be seated.



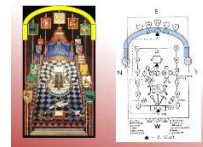
SLIDE 19 [EZRA & NEHEMIAH]

Reader 6

The principal **officers** of a RA Chapter include the Scribes Ezra & Nehemiah.

Scribe E & Scribe N stand on their name being announced.

Scribe Ezra is the Secretary and Nehemiah acts as both the Craft Junior Warden and Inner Guard too. Both are robed in white surplices which denote their standing as scholars and attendants on the Grand Sanhedrin.



SLIDE 20 [CATENARIAN ARCH]

And as you can see from this slide, together with the three Principals, they form a symbolic catenarian arch.

On this slide you will also note the 5 platonic bodies. *[pause]* These represent Earth, Water, Fire, Air and the Universe but as they are only mentioned briefly in the Symbolical Lecture, we will not discuss them further. However, a more detailed understanding can be found in the explanation of the RA jewel.



SLIDE 21 [TREASURER DC & ADC etc]

Just as in craft masonry, we also have some additional officers, namely a Treasurer,

Stands on cue.

a Director of Ceremonies with an Assistant.

Stands on cue.

a Charity Steward and a Janitor who Tyles the door.

Stands on cue, Janitor immediately retires and takes up station.

SLIDE 22 [PRINCIPAL SOJOURNERS COLLAR JEWEL]



Companions, you will all remember your exaltation when you were in the safe hands of a Sojourner throughout the ceremony. The term sojourner refers to a person who resides temporarily in a place. The three Sojourners came from Babylon, a great and glorious city. They arrived in Jerusalem, the city of legend and a place about which their fathers had told them tales of wonder. They found only desolation, ruins and rubble, a vivid reminder of the consequences of disobedience to God.

In our Chapters there are three Sojourners, namely, a Principal and two Assistants. The three Master Mason sojourners came to offer their assistance in the building of the second temple and made a very important discovery which was, of course, the sacred and mysterious name of the Most High.

Reader 7 –

The Chapter is ruled by three Principals who act severally and individually as Master – namely, Zerubbabel, the Prince of Jerusalem, Joshua the High Priest who, with Z was responsible for the building of the second temple, and Haggai, the Prophet who foretold of the building.



SLIDE 23 [Zerubbabel, Haggai and Joshua]

Z stands

Zerubbabel, or first Principal, wears a crimson robe that is an emblem of kingly dignity to remind him of the fraternal concern that he evinces for the

welfare of the chapter and the fervent zeal which actuates him in the promotion of its prosperity. To that end he subdues all passions and prejudices and cultivates charity – not to companions alone but to all mankind. His sceptre has as its emblem, a crown *[pause]* which is an emblem of sovereignty and reminds him that to reign in the hearts and affections of the companions is far more grateful to a generous mind than to rule over their lives and fortunes.

Z sits



H stands

Haggai, or second Principal, wears a purple robe which is an emblem of union and is intended to remind him that the harmony of the chapter is his constant care and as the glorious sun when at its meridian dispels the clouds which obscure the horizon, so his exertions will dissipate the gloom of jealousy and discord should they appear.

The emblem on his sceptre *[pause]* of an all-seeing eye reminds us that although our words and actions may be hidden from view, there is one whose all seeing eye is ever upon us and who knows our every thought, word and act.

H sits



J stands

The robe of Joshua, or third Principal, is blue which is one of the most beautiful and durable in Nature and is particularly characteristic of our Order which has stood the test of ages and is distinguished by its superstructure – namely universal brotherhood and benevolence. It is intended to remind us that in the breast of a Freemason those virtues should be as expansive and all-embracing as the blue vault of heaven. The emblem on his sceptre *[pause]* of a Bishop's mitre is to remind him of the solemnity and dignity of the office he has filled and will impress on his mind the sense of our dependence on God.

J sits

Reader 8 -

VALEDICTORY OR CLOSING ADDRESS

Companions, you are now about to quit this safe retreat of peace and friendship and to mix again with the busy world.

Amidst all its cares and employments forget not those sacred duties which have been so frequently impressed and so strongly recommended within the precincts of this Chapter. Be therefore discreet, prudent and temperate. Remember that in your respective Lodges you have solemnly and voluntarily vowed to relieve and befriend with unhesitating cordiality every Brother who might need your assistance, that you have promised to remind him in the most gentle manner of his failings and to aid and vindicate his character whenever wrongly traduced; to suggest the most kindly, the most palliating and the most favourable circumstances in extenuation of his conduct even when liable to reprehension and blame.

Thus, shall the world see how close is the bond that links Freemasons together.

But Companions, as members of this Supreme Degree, you are expected to extend those noble and generous sentiments still further. Let me impress on your minds and may it be instilled in your hearts, that every human creature has a just claim to your kind offices.

We, therefore, strictly enjoin you to be good to all; more especially, do we recommend to you the household of the faithful and that by diligence and fidelity in the duties of your respective vocations, by liberal beneficence and diffusive charity, by constancy and sincerity in your friendships and by your uniformly kind, just, amiable and virtuous deportment, prove to the world the happy and beneficial effects of our ancient and honourable institution. Let it not be said that you labour in vain, nor waste your strength for naught – for your word is before the Lord and your recompense is with the T A L G M H.

Finally, Companions, be all of one mind; live in peace; and may the God of Love and Peace delight to dwell within you and bless you for evermore.

Speaker 3 Concluding Remarks