

**ADDRESS BY THE MOST EXCELLENT GRAND
SUPERINTENDANT GRAHAM IVES TO THE ANNUAL
CONVOCAATION OF THE PROVINCIAL GRAND CHAPTER ON
WEDNESDAY 9th MAY 2018**

Companions, I formally welcome you all to the Annual Convocation of Provincial Grand Chapter. It is heart-warming to see so many of you present and I sincerely hope that you enjoy your day.

Today is the last opportunity I shall have to appoint and promote Companions in Provincial Grand Chapter and this has been a great pleasure and privilege for me over the last ten years. The honours bestowed are carefully assessed and have been well earned. I warmly congratulate you all and I know that you will continue to work hard for the Royal Arch within your Chapters and indeed throughout the Province.

During the course of the last few months the following Companions have received appointments and promotions in Supreme Grand Chapter: Excellent Companions Barry Harriman, Dr. David Cartwright and Terence Wright to Past Grand Standard Bearer; Excellent Companion Michael Rix to Past Assistant Grand Director of Ceremonies. Excellent Companions Richard Garn and Robert Parsons were promoted to Past Assistant Grand Sojourner. I am sure that you agree with me these honours are much deserved and I wish these worthy companions well.

As always, I have been grateful for the support and companionship that I have received during the last masonic year from the outgoing Provincial Team. We have visited a large number of Chapters together and I also thank the companions of the Chapters for the kind hospitality extended to us.

There have been a number of initiatives introduced in the Royal Arch during the course of the last year and this has been primarily as a result of the work undertaken by the Lincolnshire Royal Arch Focus Group under the able chairmanship of the Deputy Grand Superintendent, Excellent Companion David Bird. I know that you are all aware of those initiatives and I sincerely hope that you approve of what we have been doing.

All is set fair for the future in Lincolnshire so far as the Royal Arch is concerned and I am very confident that my worthy successor, Excellent Companion David Wheeler together with his Team, will take the Royal Arch forward into further sustained prosperity. I know that he will enjoy the support and companionship which I have enjoyed from you all and we all wish him well.

Companions, it is wholly appropriate that I should thank certain companions who have worked so hard to ensure that this Meeting is successful. I thank the Provincial Grand Scribe Ezra, Excellent Companion Tony Miller, for all that he has done supported by his Assistant, Excellent Companion John Hannath, and the Provincial Grand Registrar, Excellent Companion Trevor Knight. I also thank Excellent Companions Brian Roberts and Steven Sykes for the work which they have undertaken in the Provincial Office. We warmly congratulate Excellent Companion Adrian Joyce upon his appointment and investiture as Provincial Grand Scribe Ezra. I am confident that under his guidance the Provincial Office will continue to excel. I place on record again my deep thanks to Excellent Companion Tony Miller for all the work which he has undertaken in the Royal Arch. I know that he will continue to provide Excellent Companion Adrian Joyce with all the advice and assistance he requires.

The ceremonial of the Royal Arch in Lincolnshire has been led admirably by the Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies, Excellent Companion Tony Greswell and as always, I have enjoyed his friendship and companionship throughout the whole of the last year. We certainly do get on very well. He has been well supported by the Deputy Provincial Grand Directors of Ceremonies, Excellent Companions Peter Tong and Simon Butler. I also thank the Assistant Provincial Grand Directors of Ceremonies for their invaluable and efficient help.

As always, I thank Excellent Companion Dr. John Pemberton, the Provincial Grand Organist, for making sure that our Ceremony today is enriched by his inspiring music.

I thank Excellent Companion Don Osborne and Companion Jon Hollis for the skilful manner in which they have attended to the sound system which is most important for the continuity and smooth running of the proceedings today. The Provincial Grand Stewards Lodge has as always provided invaluable support throughout the whole day. I thank them all. It would be difficult for the Province to function without the support of this very important Lodge and its members.

I thank the Companions of the host Chapter, Ermine No. 2351, and indeed all the Masons of Lincoln and others who have helped with regard to the arrangements for today.

Companions, in this Province the Royal Arch has always had a very healthy percentage of members in relation to the Craft. We stand steady at over 47% which is one of the highest percentages in the country. Sadly, this has not been the case in other Provinces and indeed in London. Several years ago, bearing in mind the indissoluble link between the Craft and the Royal Arch the then Most Excellent Pro First Grand Principal and Most Worshipful Pro Grand Master, The Marquis of Northampton, set up a Working Party to consider all aspects of the Royal Arch, including issues of recruitment and retention, and to make recommendations. Companions, I remind you that at a Meeting of Supreme Grand Chapter on the 10th day of November 2004 the Preliminary Declaration was amended by adding the following words as a second paragraph:

“At the Quarterly Communication of the 10th December 2003 the United Grand Lodge of England acknowledged and pronounced the status of the Supreme Order of the Holy Royal Arch to be an extension to, but neither a superior nor a subordinate part of, the Degrees which precede it.”

Companions, this amendment was recommended by the said Working Party and a few years later was acknowledged by the United Grand Lodge of England and Supreme Grand Chapter to have been unhelpful. It was formally deleted, and we quite rightly reverted back to the Preliminary Declaration which holds firm to this day. It is always worth reminding us of the terms of this Declaration.

It is under a heading in the Book of Constitutions: “Government of The Craft”.

“By the solemn act of Union between the two Grand Lodges of Free-Masons of England in December 1813, it was “Declared and Pronounced that pure Antient Masonry consists of three degrees, and no more, viz., those of the Entered Apprentice, the Fellow Craft, and the Master Mason, including the Supreme Order of the Holy Royal Arch”.

Hence, Companions, the indissoluble link between the Craft and the Royal Arch was quite rightly firmly cemented again.

However, the Working Party did in addition recommend certain changes to our Ritual and the qualification for being Installed as a Third Principal of a Chapter.

Those changes were approved at the said Meeting of Supreme Grand Chapter and continue to apply to this day. Some of the changes were mandatory and some were discretionary.

Historically the Antient Grand Lodge, which was formed in the middle of the 18th century, practised the Royal Arch as the fourth degree. The Premier Grand Lodge at that time did not recognise the Royal Arch. Last year we celebrated 300 years since the start of the Premier Grand Lodge. The United Grand Lodge of England was formed in December 1813 and it was then that the Royal Arch became indissolubly linked with the Craft as set out in the Preliminary Declaration. Companions, did we miss an opportunity a few years ago to adopt the practice of the Antients? Should the Royal Arch be recognised formally as the fourth degree in pure and antient freemasonry? Or would that be counter-productive? Would that weaken the Craft and indeed the Royal Arch? We are where we are, and the Royal Arch is quite rightly in a very good place with regard to its relationship and indissoluble link with the Craft.

In considering these questions which I have just raised I believe it is worth quoting from certain aspects of the debate which took place at that historic Meeting in Supreme Grand Chapter on the 10th November 2004.

Excellent Companion Elkan Levy was called upon by the Most Excellent Pro First Grand Principal to speak in support of the proposed changes to the Preliminary Declaration and the changes to the Ritual and qualifications to be Installed as a Third Principal of a Chapter. I quote from part of his Address:

“ME Pro First Grand Principal and Companions, the Royal Arch is a most beautiful degree. It stands beyond Craft Masonry as the culmination of the candidate’s journey through pure antient Masonry. The Craft essentially concerns itself with the relationship of man to his fellow man in this world while Chapter deals with the relationship of man to his Creator and to eternity.

The First Degree instructs the new Freemason in his moral approach to his fellow man. In the Second Degree the lessons are of intellectual truth and wisdom, while the Third Degree comprehends the importance of integrity in all our dealings, through the beauties of the lessons of the five points of fellowship. The Ceremony of Raising looks forward to the inevitable destiny of mortal man and teaches us how to die.

The Holy Royal Arch stands beyond this. It places man in his relationship with the Divine. It places him in the context of eternity, in the context of the great

act of Creation. The Sojourners return to their roots and discover the secret known to their ancestors. They handle this knowledge with honour and uprightness, for the Commandments issued to their ancestors apply to them as well. Man's responsibility to his Creator continues across history and throughout the generations. The candidate now knows how he stands before his God as well as before his fellow man.

The Royal Arch is therefore the natural progression after the Craft and in theory there should be few, if any, Brethren who do not continue to it. The reality, however, is very different and the purpose of the amendments that are before you is to make the ceremony more attractive."

Excellent Companion Levy stated at the end of his Address as follows: "The Holy Royal Arch and its Companions have everything to gain and nothing to lose from these proposals." The Most Excellent Pro First Grand Principal seconded his Proposition and then called upon Excellent Companion Neville Joseph to speak and he spoke against the Proposition. He stated amongst other things and I quote: "But the Order's greatest advantage is that it is a part of Freemasonry. There are many side degrees and they have beautiful and interesting rituals, and they have a valuable place, but, if I may quote the Assistant Grand Scribe Ezra: "They are associations of Freemasonry, they are not Freemasonry". Excellent Companion Joseph then said: "I would describe them as what Freemasons do in their spare time." *[laughter]*

"But the Royal Arch, the Royal Arch alone of any of the supposed extras, is part and, as you have just heard, it is an essential part of Freemasonry. This is what we offer to Master Masons to come into this Degree."

In referring to the proposed amendment/addition to the Preliminary Declaration he stated further on: "We reduce ourselves merely to the status of yet another of the multitude of side degrees, an interesting, a graceful addition to Freemasonry, perhaps, but outside Freemasonry. What answer do we give to the young Mason who wants to extend his Freemasonry and wants to go further along the road? What have we got that is so much better than any of the other side degrees? The one thing we have to offer at the moment is that we are Freemasonry; we are not just a side degree. We are not just a pleasurable extension. We are Freemasonry, just as much as the First, Second and Third Degrees, through which he has already passed. It is not just another club, not just another thing that Freemasons do in their spare time."

Companions, in my last Address to Provincial Grand Chapter as Most Excellent Grand Superintendent I wanted to draw these issues to your attention so that we can honour and applaud the indissoluble link that clearly exists historically and today between the Craft and the Royal Arch.

As you all know, I am very passionate about the Royal Arch and the prominent position it holds in connection with the Craft. In Freemasonry we embark upon a long journey of self-knowledge and discovery. In the Royal Arch we pass from the practical existence on earth reflected in the three degrees of the Craft, to the spiritual side of our nature and consider the nature of God and our relationship with Him. Therefore, in the Royal Arch we complete the journey through pure and antient Freemasonry because we not only complete the Freemason, but we complete the Man.

So Companions, I am nearing the end of my personal magical and wonderful journey over the last ten years as most Excellent Grand Superintendent in and over this wonderful Province of Lincolnshire. Companions, it has been a great honour and privilege to serve you. In the unforgettable words of Jim Carrey at the end of the film 'The Truman Show': "Good morning, and in case I don't see ya, good afternoon, good evening and good night!" May the True and Living God Most High be with you all now and always.