



WYP Monthly Newsletter

Staffordshire Freemasons Digital News



Provincial Grand Chapter Special



Staffordshire Provincial Grand Chapter

14th April 2026



PROVINCIAL GRAND CHAPTER AGM –

Address from the Most Excellent Grand Superintendant

Companions, since my appointment as Grand Superintendant, I have ensured that in the summer of each year, I send an email to each of you to your individual emails to explain what is going on in the Province: what we have done, and what we are planning to do. As such I do not see the need to stand here and reiterate those ideas. It is my belief that this annual convocation of Provincial Grand Chapter should be a celebration of you, the Companions of the Order in this Staffordshire Province. As such, I anticipate that around 75-80% of it should be dedicated to acknowledging those who give so much of their time to the Royal Arch. Of course, there is some administration and some voting to do, but apart from two or three items I would like to bring to your attention, recognising individuals for their efforts is where my focus is.

First and foremost, I would like to make special reference to those Officers who have today stepped down after many years of service. I have already made mention of the services paid to the Province by E Companion Paul Lockley, and in addition I would like to mention E Companion Tony Askey who has been a stalwart for a number of years in various roles and has always paid attention to detail in all his tasks. E Companion Peter Robinson has been our organist since 1997 – a total of some 29 years, which is more than I have personally been a Freemason! Peter, thank you very much for the long and dutiful service you have given to this Order.

An additional mention of two people who have stepped down as Stewards. E Companions Chris Barker and Rob Barker were so effective during their first year, that they were re-appointed last year; and they did not disappoint in their second year either. In fact, their service over the last two years has been so impressive, that today they have both been appointed and invested as Active Assistant Sojourners, and I have no doubt they will once again prove worthy of that appointment.

Last year there were a couple of people who took on some big roles – we received permission from Supreme Grand Chapter to create two new roles of Assistants to the Provincial Grand Principals, in the persons of John Cameron and Paul Molley. They hit the ground running and have filled those roles extremely well. In addition, we had a new Provincial Grand Scribe Ezra in Chris Priestley, and he continues to fulfil that role, which is a very demanding and pivotal position in any Province. Our Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies, Paul Crutchley has had a very



busy year for us, and I am extremely grateful to him for all that he has done – the number of compliments I have personally heard about his work from both within the Province and out of it, has been heartwarming and it is a credit to him. In addition, there has been some great work done by our Treasurer, Rob Adams, and our Registrar, Mark Jones.

To EVERYONE who has stepped down from their active roles, I thank you very much for your service to the Province. The incoming Provincial Grand Master Jeremy Roberts was to have been the Provincial Scribe Nehemiah, but due to him taking up that new and demanding role our current Provincial Scribe Nehemiah, David Thomas, has agreed to continue for another year. Thank you David for all your hard work over the last year visiting Chapters and appraising us of their health and well being and thank you for agreeing to remain in post for a further year. Congratulations also to Jeremy on his forthcoming appointment as Provincial Grand Master. Thank you.



A long list of thanks for today's experience too. To Chris Priestley our Provincial Grand Scribe Ezra. To Paul Crutchley our Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies. These companions have been busy organising this meeting for some time now and I thank you all for your efforts which I believe have resulted in yet another successful AGM. In addition, my thanks to Richard Parrott, Tony Askey and their team for providing the necessary transport, collection and assembly of the Chapter furniture, as well as dismantling it immediately following this convocation and ensuring its safe return, and our Alms collectors who will shortly take your Alms collection. My thanks also, to Kevin Gibbons for his invaluable assistance in preparing for today. Finally, I also extend my thanks to Debby in the Provincial Office and would ask our Provincial Grand Scribe Ezra to pass on my thanks to her.

To those who I have appointed today, I congratulate you. These honours are very well deserved. To those who have been appointed to active office, you will have not only the opportunity, but you also have the added DUTY of supporting the Province and Chapters during your term in office. This means there is an expectation that you will visit Chapters at their Installation meetings and also at Full Provincial Visits. You will receive summonses for these meetings and, as was discussed with you on acceptance of the role, you will be expected to attend a reasonable number of these.

I would like to report on membership. In 2025 the number of individual Companions in the Province increased by four. This is a small number in the grand scheme of things, and we will need to do much better in coming years – we should be aiming at a net increase of around 15, based on current membership figures which would be a 2% increase. However, an increase of four is actually only the second time in 18 years that we have had a positive figure, so it is a starting point and hopefully the beginning of growth following the building together and one journey, one organisation effect.

On that particular matter, two specific tasks being undertaken at present are:

- Chris Adams is reviewing the Royal Arch Ambassador scheme as this seems to have lost its way a little. Chris will be engaging with lodges on this matter so that we can relaunch it
- We are also currently working on ensuring data held in Chapters aligns with data held on Adelphi – please respond to the Provincial Grand Registrar's requests for assistance on this.

Increasing membership in Chapters can be a lot of work but I promise you two things. Firstly, some of that work will be enjoyable such as socialising with potential candidates and being able to talk about our hobby and more particularly the Royal Arch. Please remember though that our success will depend very much on Craft membership too and so we should continue in our efforts to bring people into Masonry just as much as we do bringing them into this Order. Secondly, I promise you that if successful, you will absolutely reap the benefits and make your meetings so much more enjoyable going forward. Please use the Building Together Toolkit; it is there to help you – pick out the bits you need and utilise them

and don't forget that we at the Province stand ready to assist as well. If you need any help, let us know! We are seeing some big successes with single and double initiation ceremonies, and I know that one particular Chapter is looking to a triple ceremony as well. Exciting times Companions, and the last time I looked at the figures for 2026, Adelphi was reporting a positive net gain of 15 which is marvellous. Well done to all involved. Proof positive that it can be done!

Companions, another key to our success will be making sure that companions enjoy their Royal Arch Masonry. There has got to be a reason for them to keep coming back to the next meeting. I believe strongly that bonding with each other has a significant role to play. As such, we organised a trip to Bristol to watch the Veils Ceremony and I am delighted to inform you that 46 Companions attended and were warmly welcomed by the Companions there. My thanks to Nigel Thomas for organising that trip. We are hoping to organise a visit to Rosslyn Chapel or to Great Queen Street and widen it to craft and maybe friends and family too. Also, Dormston Chapter will be doing a demonstration of the veils ceremony in November at Shelton, so anyone unable to go to Bristol might still be able to enjoy the differences in that ceremony. Information will follow in due course.

Companions, last year we introduced the travelling sceptre in a bid to increase visiting. The rules for the scheme were sent to all Chapters. The Sceptre has returned to us today and will once again be handed to the Chapter with the most Companions here present. Companion Scribe Ezra, can you tell me which Chapter that is? Can I have a representative from that Chapter please, to receive from me the Sceptre?

Finally, Companions, my congratulations to all those who received first appointment to, or promotion in, Grand rank. Receiving first appointment to the rank of Past Grand Standard Bearer is Ralph Ritchey, receiving promotions to Past Assistant Grand Sojourner are Alan Walker and Simon Palfreyman. E Comp David Dyson, I we know that this promotion had more to do with your efforts than mine, but Simon is also a Staffordshire Companion and as it tradition, we are claiming it as our own! Finally, Companions, receiving promotion to Past Grand Sword Bearer is the Provincial Grand Master, John Lockley. We will celebrate with them at Great Queen Street on 30th April - if you can join us, that would be superb.

Companions it remains a great honour for me to lead this Royal Arch Province. My predecessors have always signed off by stressing how important it is that you enjoy yourselves, and I continue to support that statement. Please enjoy your Royal Arch Masonry and I look forward to visiting your Chapters and enjoying your company too. May your God bless you and keep you safe.

Thank you, Companions.

