



PROVINCE OF HAMPSHIRE
AND ISLE OF WIGHT

A Guide for Chapter Directors of Ceremonies

ONE JOURNEY · ONE ORGANISATION

Introduction

The aim of this guide is to assist Companions who are, or hope in the future, to become Director of Ceremonies in their Chapter.

Chapter ritual comes in many and varied forms, to list the most common:

Complete; Aldersgate; Domatic; Emulation; Savage Ritual; the recently introduced Hampshire & Isle of Wight Enhanced Ritual and not to mention all the variations within these as worked by the many chapters in our wonderful Province.

With so many variations clearly, this guide cannot cover all of them instead the aim is to give general advice and information which will stimulate you to consider your duties as a Director of Ceremonies and help you to highlight areas where you may wish to take advice from the Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies; One of his Deputies or your Visiting Chapter Officer

General DC responsibilities.

- To ensure that the Chapter room is correctly set out, Warrant displayed, 'reserved' places as necessary, water and glasses, Alms bags available at the end of a meeting (or before leaving the building) to ensure that, if necessary, Chapter 'furniture' is put away and the Lodge room returned to its generic state
- To be both friendly and assertive – 'think like a sergeant-major, speak and act like an officer'
- To advise and assist the Principals in conducting the Chapter meetings including who will be doing what and when including who is prompting.
- (It is the 1st Principals prerogative to select/invite participation, but he will seek advice and, in many cases, will ask the DC to make the necessary arrangements on his behalf)
- To direct all the Chapter ceremonial including briefing Candidates and Sojourners on words, general movement and signs to ensure that candidates are not embarrassed
- To ensure that all officers are fully aware of their duties and how to perform them including Scribe N in the reception of latecomers
- To ensure that acting officers are available for absent officers
- To ensure that the Janitor is aware how the candidate should be prepared for the ceremony of Exaltation.
- To agree what the ADC will do on your behalf at the meeting such as the evacuation announcement; signing-in & visitor greetings.
- To ensure that officers and others with physical disabilities are properly catered for
- To conduct proceedings at dinner in a timely manner
- To liaise with the Caterer on meal timings and service
- To advise brethren who will be presenting toasts well in advance on the night and preferably well before the day.
- To request a visiting MEZ or other 'senior' visitor, in conjunction with the MEZ to respond to the visitors' toast. (Before the Chapter is Tyled if possible and certainly before the companion sits for dinner)
- To give the Janitor's toast if the Janitor is not available at the end of dinner

Administration of the Chapter

There can be no doubt that a good Scribe E, DC and Treasurer will be the foundations on which a successful Chapter is maintained, and the By-laws and Book of Constitution Rules and Regulations are not broken.

These three Officers should work together to support and guide the MEZ and his co-principals in the ruling and governing the Chapter.

Support and Guidance is available from the Provincial Grand Scribe E; Provincial Grand Treasurer and the Provincial Grand DC.

The emergency alarm goes off

Calmly ensure evacuation takes place without hesitation even if you think it might be a false alarm. The only document to be collected is the attendance register so that a rollcall can be made to ensure everyone is out and safe.

To achieve this, it is important a briefing is giving before the opening of the Chapter to ensure all present are aware of the emergency exits and meeting place.

Multiple Ceremonies

Chapters may need or wish to perform ceremonies with more than one candidate from time to time. Chapter DCs may wish to make direct contact with the Provincial GDC in good time when planning a multi-candidate ceremony for the first time. Some Chapter DCs may assume because they have done them before or because they have seen them done 'that way' elsewhere, that it must be correct. It probably isn't. There are occasional reports of well-meaning but truly awful multi-candidate ceremonies. Don't let your Chapter be one of them.

Candidate preparation

There is no reason not to give some simple instructions to the candidate on the night. It will make life easier for him while hoodwinked and make for a better ceremony.

Ceremony of Exaltations

As I have previously stated there are far too many rituals in use for me to go into specifics.

The important thing is that at the end his exaltation the candidate has enjoyed completing his final step in 'pure ancient masonry'. To achieve that current recommendations from Supreme Grand Chapter are that the lectures are not given on the night of exaltation because they extend the evening and cause 'overload' to the candidate. The Explanation of the signs should be given.

The Most Excellent Grand Superintendent supports these recommendations, he appreciates that individual chapters may feel that the second part of the mystical lecture is an important part of the ceremony of exaltation and should be given. He is also keen that the 'Setting of the Scene', explanation is read at appropriate parts of the ceremony. (see separate booklet)

Provincial Visits

Each Chapter receives a regular visit from a senior member of the Provincial Executive. The working Provincial DC for the visit will make contact with the Chapter two to three weeks prior to such a visit and will provide guidance on how the evening should progress. On the night the VIP will be brought into the Chapter room under the direction of the Provincial DC, and he will explain in detail how this will be achieved. It will be your responsibility, as the Chapter DC, to oversee the ceremony. The VIP will leave the Chapter room at an appropriate stage of the convocation again, under the direction of the Provincial DC, thereby allowing the Chapter to deal with any items of business it may have. At the Festive Board, the Provincial DC will run the proceedings up to the time that the VIP takes his leave usually around 9.30pm

Companions Sitting Alone

Companions sitting alone are often new companions, whose proposer or seconder are not present, or a companion who does not attend frequently and may be feeling a little out of place or uncomfortable being back in a convocation. Please encourage such companions to either move to sit with other companions or ask a companion(s) who attends regularly to go and sit with them and engage in conversation with them. The Chapter Almoner or Membership Officer may well prove suitable companions to support such companions.

Ceremony for a disabled candidate or disabled officer

The Provincial GDC is able to give guidance on how to accommodate disabled candidates. It is entirely acceptable for a candidate who has health issues making kneeling uncomfortable to remain standing and the ritual adjusted to reflect this change there by ensure that the candidate is comfortable.

Calling-off

It is not generally known that it is possible to call off in Chapter.

Calling-off should take place if activities are to take place that involves masons being present who are not Royal Arch masons and if a 'foreign' ceremony is to be demonstrated. (see appendix for ritual).

At Dinner

The MEZ, and, depending on the normal practice of the particular Chapter, the other two Principals or Principal Sojourner not the DC, are in control of the gavel at dinner just as the three Principals are in control in the Chapter room. In general, however, a First Principal, especially an inexperienced one, will be guided by his DC and, from the Provincial GDC down, it is correct to discuss quietly with him the next procedure and then ask, "Most Excellent, please gavel". If it is the practice of the Chapter that all three Principals Gavel it is good practice to ensure all three are ready before asking, "Most Excellent, please gavel".

A Companion, not being the DC, who wants to call something to the attention of the companions should consult with the DC and he will advise the MEZ as appropriate. The MEZ has the prerogative to choose the meal in most Chapters, but this will depend on individual Chapters. It is not necessary to exclude catering staff during wine takings, or during toasts. It is, however, appropriate to do so if fire is to be given.

It is perfectly acceptable not to take wine with individuals who are to be 'toasted' later.

Fire, when given, should be moderate in speed; not slow and laboured or rapid. It should never be a contest.

Final Grace is preferable when meal paraphernalia has been cleared. However, this is not a fixed rule. A DC should be aware of time pressures and can ask for grace when the final course and/or coffee are still on the tables if acceptable to the MEZ.

After the Final Grace the interchange between the MEZ and the Principal Sojourner should take place. Companions should be reminded that during this interchange there should be no Eating; Drinking or Talking and that the Toast is taken seated, with the Left Hand and in Total Silence.

Before the King and the Craft and Royal Arch Masonry, all events are 'wine taking'

Chapter Fire should be explained to the candidate at an appropriate time.

If there are no, or very few, Companions present who do not hold Provincial Grand Rank ask all present to honour the toast to Province unless their name appears on the toast list, thereby ruling out any embarrassment that the few junior Companions present may feel by being asked to stand whilst the majority are seated.

Long breaks between toasts prolong the evening. A raffle can be drawn any time once ticket sales are finished, it's worth asking if Companions still require tickets, probably after all 'wine takings'.

Sharing the ritual

It is entirely appropriate to distribute work widely and to encourage less experienced companions to participate with ritual presentation and Proposers to their candidates. Similarly companions as well as Past Z's can take acting-offices, if they feel happy to do so, in the event of an invested officer being absent, apart from the three Principals chairs which must be occupied by a suitably qualified Past Principal. It is quite appropriate and encouraged for both the Sojourners and Principals work to be shared between respectively three Sojourners and the three Principals. The MEZ and Principal Sojourner may wish to perform all their respective work himself at least once in the year. However, there is no requirement for them to do so and companions who are not good ritualists must not be 'forced' to act beyond their competence.

The three lectures and the explanation of the signs can also be given in catechetical form thereby allowing more companions to take part in the ceremony of exaltation.

The most important element in a Masonic Ceremony is the experience of the Candidate. Everything we do should be focused on his comfort and enjoyment and not the egos of the Chapter or its officers.

It is impolite to be imposing upon any Companion on the night or even at rehearsal except in emergency. Good notice is both good manners and

enabling of learning or revision. A good DC will have several companions who, by arrangement, will be ready to step into a breach at short notice but that should be the exception not the rule for absentee officers.

Most Excellent Grand Superintendent's Booklet

It is the Most Excellent Grand Superintendent's wish that every newly exalted companion receives a copy of this booklet on the night of his exaltation. It will normally be presented by the Visiting Chapter Officer.

White or Coloured shirt

The book of Constitution guidance is: "Shirts must have a plain white collar and, if not completely white, should be of a restrained pattern or hue".

Regalia

Royal Arch regalis consists of:

Apron; Sash and Jewel of the order which must **always** be worn.

Breast Jewels

A past Z's jewel may be worn by duly qualified companions as may a jewel celebrating a Chapter's Centenary or such anniversary within that chapter and may be worn by any companion of the chapter.

A Craft Charity jewel for a current festival may also be worn if sanctioned by the Most Excellent Grand Superintendent.

The large Blue Tercentenary breast jewel issued by UGLE, if possessed by the companion, should also be worn.

Craft Past Masters Jewels and Charity Jewels other than that mentioned above should not be worn.

The Royal Arch Jewel is, as explained on the night of exaltation, the most important jewel in "pure ancient masonry" and must be worn by all companions at every Chapter Convocation and Craft meeting that the companion attends. It should be noted that a Past Z Jewel does not replace the jewel of the Order, it may be worn by a duly qualified past principal of the chapter with the jewel of the order not instead of it and not at Craft meetings.

Salutations

Salutations are not given to any individual in the Chapter.

I hope you have found this guide helpful as you continue in or are about to obtain the office of Director of Ceremonies in your Chapter.

As our past Most Excellent Grand Superintendent has on many occasions stated, "The Royal Arch is to be enjoyed and not endured" and you, as the DC of your Chapter, are the Companion who can help to make this enjoyment happen for the members of your Chapter.

Christopher T.B. Davis

2nd Provincial Grand Principal

June 2025

Appendix

Procedure for declaring a Recess/Reconvening

Declaring a Recess

MEZ (Knocks) " Companions there will be a short recess"

DC "Companions to order"

MEZ "Excellent Companions 2nd and 3rd Principals ,reveil the Pedestal"

The DC collects the cushion with the veil on it and goes to the rear of the Pedestal and faces East. The 2nd and 3rd Principals proceed to the Pedestal and, when level, the DC about faces and the 2nd and 3rd Principals reveil the Pedestal and return to their seats. Again, when level, the DC about faces and returns to his seat, placing the cushion on its resting place.

MEZ " Companion Principal Sojourner it is my command that you declare a recess"

P.S "Companions, it is the MEZ's command there is to be a short recess"

The principal Sojourner closes V.S.L and returns to his seat and continues

"Companions, stay within heil for the further dispatch of R.A business"

The P.Soj Knocks with his foot followed by the 1st and 2nd Assts. and again himself.

Reconvening

The Companions retu rned and seated

MEZ (Knocks) " Assist me to reconvene this Convocation"

DC "Companions to order"

MEZ "Companion Principal Sojourner it is my command that you reconvene this Convocation"

P.S "Companions, by the command of the MEZ , I reconvene this Convocation"

The P.Soj Knocks with his foot followed by the 1st and 2nd Assts. and again himself. He opens the V.S.L and at the same time the 2nd and 3rd Principals remove the veil, assisted by the DC in the usual manner.

DC "Companions be seated"

Continue with the business of the Convocation

