



Talking Heads

The Next Step: Into The Royal Arch



West Lancashire Freemasons
PROVINCIAL GRAND LODGE OF WEST LANCASHIRE

“Furthering your Masonic education through mentoring”

1. Introduction

This presentation has been adapted from the work developed by the Metropolitan Grand Chapter of London as demonstrated at a meeting of Leyland St Andrew's Lodge on the 24th February 2015.

It is designed for three people to deliver – two to conduct the dialogue and a Narrator, who should be an AtoPrGPs, to make introductions and explanations.

2. Preparation

Before arriving at the meeting, the presenters need to ensure they have the following:

- a) MM and PM aprons;
- b) A West Lancs and a RA tie for the MM and PM respectively to wear during the dialogue;
- c) RA regalia for PM to demonstrate;
- d) "Next Step" leaflets;
- e) Book of Constitutions, tagged at the Preliminary Declaration;
- f) Laptop and projector – ascertain if Hall has a projector screen;

- g) If a laptop is not being used, pictures of the RA jewel in case there are not sufficient RA members in the Lodge when demonstrating the jewel during the dialogue.
- h) Three scripts. Note – in the script cues for advancing the PowerPoint presentation are shown in *mauve*.

On arriving at the Lodge the team should do the following:

- a) Ensure that two chairs are available to be placed suitably on the Lodge floor; or four chairs if part of the dialogue is to be delivered while sitting.
- b) Reserve seats in the body of the Lodge for the participants so they can access the floor of the Lodge easily and the Narrator has a suitable place to sit during the dialogue;
- c) Check the acoustics and size of the room so the dialogue can be delivered at a pace and volume to ensure that everyone can hear, including those who may be behind the speaker for the time being;
- d) If being used, consider best place for laptop, projector and screen;
- e) Decide whether it would be preferable for the PM and MM to stand or sit to deliver their sections, depending on room size, numbers present etc;
- f) Inform the Secretary that he will be asked to read out the Preliminary Declaration from the Book of Constitutions;

- g) Inform the RA Representative, the SVO and VO (if present) that they will be asked to stand towards the end of the dialogue; and
- h) Check whether the Lodge has a Chapter attached to it, so the final page of the dialogue can be amended appropriately if required.

The Lodge does not need to be called off.

Assuming the Lodge is open in the normal way, the agenda item: “To attend a presentation of ‘Talking Heads – The Next Step: Into the Royal Arch’” should be announced by the WM. The presenters then remove their aprons and regalia and put them on their chairs where they have been sitting within the Lodge.

The PM should ensure he brings, and is wearing, his RA breast jewel. They then move to the West and place two of the four available chairs side-by-side in front of the SW’s pedestal.



3. Script

[Opening Slide of Presentation should be displayed at this point]

While they are doing this, the Narrator moves to the middle of the floor facing East and gives the following introduction:

Narrator: “WM, thank you for allowing us the opportunity to perform this dialogue within your Lodge. (Introduce accompanying performers if not already done by the WM). Our presentation is aimed at introducing the Royal Arch to those who are not members as well as to kindle further interest for those already in this beautiful Order. It is based on a dialogue between two brethren that takes place before the start of a Lodge meeting in the robbing room. One is a fairly new Master Mason, and the other an experienced Past Master and member of the Royal Arch. We hope you enjoy our performance!”

The Narrator then moves to N.E. and sits in a chair in the front row of the Lodge which has previously been reserved for him. The two presenters collect their Masonic cases from a suitable point in the W. of the Lodge where they have been placed (perhaps behind the IG’s chair or on a back row seat in the W.). They then put their cases on chairs placed just in front of the SW’s pedestal, open them and begin

putting on their regalia. During this process they greet each other as is typical in the robing area before a meeting (e.g. Hello, John; comment on the weather and what their journeys were like). After the initial greetings, the dialogue proceeds as follows:

PM: Well, here we are again, ready for another meeting, although we have no ceremony to perform.

MM: That's a pity! I know I've been a Master Mason for a while now and I'm beginning to realise the significance of our ceremonies as I hear them again, but I keep finding new questions to ask.

PM: That's inevitable, of course, but is there anything puzzling you at the moment that I might be able to help with?

MM: There is actually. Can you tell me about that tie you're wearing with those strange symbols on it and what is the Jewel you have just put in your breast pocket? I've seen several members in the Lodge wearing that tie and the same with the Jewel, which also has ribbons of different colours.

PM: The tie and the Jewel show that I'm a member of the Holy Royal Arch - one of my most enjoyable Masonic activities. It is an Order closely related to Craft Masonry – in fact,

membership of the Royal Arch is described as being the completion and climax of a Mason's Craft experience.

Indeed, it is the only other bit of Freemasonry recognised as opposed to acknowledged by Grand Lodge. *[Slide 2]* The Head of the Royal Arch in our Province is our own Provincial Grand Master, James Anthony Harrison.

MM: In that case I'd definitely like to know more. You're called Companions, aren't you, instead of a Brethren, and don't you meet in Chapters, instead of Lodges?

PM: Yes, that's right. But here's a suggestion: why don't we share our conversation with everybody present here tonight? I feel sure others might be asking the same questions as you. I'm also fairly sure that those who are already Royal Arch Masons will be interested to hear a little more about the Order. As you say, we can all learn something new at every meeting – it's that daily advancement in Masonic knowledge!

MM: Good idea!

Click to fade out images of PGM/MEGS leaving blank screen
If intending to sit, they collect the other two chairs that have been placed ready, perhaps near the back of the Lodge, and move towards the East, the PM to sit in the north between the WM and the Secretary's table, and the MM to sit

in the South not quite as far as the JW's pedestal. However, speakers generally find it easier to stand and move around a little as they talk, so often do not sit. The chairs with the cases on them stay where they are.

PM: You know, if you'd taken your Third Degree some 250 years ago it is quite likely that, at the same meeting or very soon afterwards, you would have "proceeded" into the Royal Arch, to complete your admission into Freemasonry, as is still the case in Scotland.

MM: So why is the Royal Arch a separate Order today? And what is a Craft Mason missing by not being a member?

PM: Well done! You've asked the two key questions and a little history will explain why the Royal Arch is a separate Order. It's due to events that occurred way back in the history of English Freemasonry in the 1700's when the Craft and the Royal Arch were the subject of much disagreement.

MM: That would have been during the reigns of King George I and King George II then?

PM: Clever historian - Indeed it was! That's a good reference point for setting the time frame in history. Shall we let *names Narrator* give us a little history lesson?

[Slide 3]

MM: Yes, that's a good idea; it's about time that we gave him something to do!

Narrator (*stands*): In the early days of masonry there was only one Grand Lodge in England. It was founded in 1717 by four Lodges who met at [Click] 'The Goose and Gridiron' Tavern in London. This Premier Grand Lodge, as it was known, rewrote and formalised parts of the ritual. Not everyone was happy with the changes made and so it didn't take long for some disaffected Masons to set-up a rival Grand Lodge impressively called [Click] 'The Most Ancient and Honourable Society of Free and Accepted Masons', popularly shortened to 'The Antients'. The Antients claimed they were continuing to do things as they had previously been done for many, many years. (*sits*)

MM: I've heard the Antients mentioned before, but weren't they also called Atholl Lodges?

PM: Yes, indeed! Carry on *names Narrator*, please tell us a bit more.

Narrator: (*stands*) The Antients Grand Lodge was also known as the [Click] Atholl Grand Lodge because the [Click] 3rd and 4th Dukes of Atholl between them served as Grand Masters of the Antients for over thirty years. Laurence Dermott, the

Antients' Grand Secretary, described the Royal Arch as being 'the root, heart and marrow of Masonry'. He is also credited with giving the Premier Grand Lodge the then derisory name of 'The Moderns', even though they were the older body. This name was intended to highlight the fact that they had "modernised" the ritual, whereas the Antients were continuing to use it un-amended. *(sits)*

MM: Did the differences between the two Grand Lodges also include conflicting views about the Royal Arch then?

PM: Yes, they did! The Antients didn't have separate Chapters, but worked the Royal Arch Degree in their [\[Click\]](#) Craft Lodges as a fourth degree, having the power to denominate itself a Chapter to confer the Royal Arch Degree.

However, the Moderns didn't want the Chapter degree worked in their Lodges [\[Click\]](#) because they considered it not part of Craft Masonry. Nevertheless, they set-up their own Grand Chapter as a separate body in 1766 and some eminent masons of the day were members of both Antients and Moderns Lodges and Chapters.

MM: So, let me repeat this so that I understand it correctly. We had two Grand Lodges who were great rivals: the Antients who worked Royal Arch ceremonies in their Lodge meetings, and the Moderns who kept the Royal Arch

separate. There must have been great rivalry between these two Grand Lodges back then, but we have only one Grand Lodge today, which means that those differences must have been resolved.

PM: That is indeed the case. At the end of the 1700s attempts were being made to merge them. However, the difference in approach to the Royal Arch and its place in Freemasonry caused one of the biggest obstacles to reconciliation. Real progress was not made, therefore, until [\[Click\]](#) the Duke of Sussex became Grand Master of the Moderns and his brother, the Duke of Kent, became Grand Master of the Antients. Their closeness enabled the eventual Union to take place on [\[Click\]](#) 27th December 1813, with the Duke of Sussex elected as the Grand Master.

This Union was finally agreed only after a tough compromise had been reached. Perhaps the Secretary (or Master) will read out the Preliminary Declaration that can be found in the preamble to Rule 1 of today's [\[Slide 4\]](#) Book of Constitutions, as it will illustrate my point.

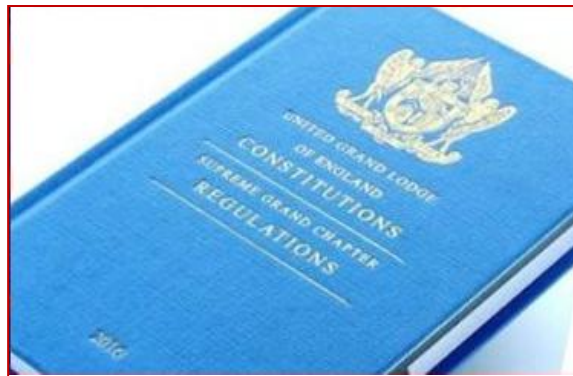
Secretary or Master: “By the solemn Act of Union between the two Grand Lodges of Free-Masons of England in December 1813, it was ‘declared and pronounced that pure Antient Masonry consists of three degrees and no more, viz., those of the Entered Apprentice, the Fellow Craft, and the Master

Mason, including the Supreme Order of the Holy Royal Arch’.

PM: Perhaps (*names Narrator*) can clarify things for us?

Narrator (*stands*): In the end, the compromise that enabled the Union to proceed was this: the Royal Arch remained part of pure Ancient Masonry, as is still reflected today by the fact that the Chapter Jewel is worn in Craft Lodges (thus satisfying the Antients). However, the Royal Arch was nevertheless treated as a separate Order from the Craft, as it is now, and has not subsequently been worked in a Craft Lodge (thus satisfying the Moderns). (*sits*)

PM: (*Holds up the B of Cs for all to see*) Our present Book of Constitution also contains the Regulations for Supreme Grand Chapter and they may be useful to you for future reference.



MM: I'll have to look them up. (*Laughs*) The Book of Constitutions doesn't exactly make good bedtime reading. So what happened after the Union was agreed?

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PM: After 1813 the Antients' Lodges could no longer perform exaltations under their Craft Warrant and the Chapters that were in existence at the date of the Craft Union were required to unite with a Lodge. Those that didn't just went out of existence. *[Click]*

To this day a Chapter is usually attached to a warranted Lodge and usually takes that Lodge's number and precedence, although its governance, meetings and membership are completely separate from those of the Lodge.

[A slide can be incorporated at this point showing the local links between Chapters and Lodge. The PM can expand on these)

MM: So when and how did the Supreme Grand Chapter of today come about?

PM: Much work was involved in reorganising the Craft after the Union of the two Grand Lodges. Finally, four years after the Union, administrative attention turned to the Royal Arch and to the then known United Grand Chapter and in 1821 its title was changed to the present name of The Supreme Grand Chapter. Today, the United Grand Lodge of England and the Supreme Grand Chapter work together in close harmony – with joint headquarters, joint administration and often, joint Rulers.

MM: OK, I can see why the Royal Arch is constituted as a separate Order today and why you wear your jewel and the tie in a Craft Lodge. Can you now explain to me the symbol on the tie and the different coloured ribbons used with the jewels?

[Slide 5]

PM: The symbol on the tie is a triple tau. A tau is the Greek letter 't' and in ancient times was used as a sign or mark of innocence or of health. Putting three together forms a triple tau, the symbolism of which alludes to the Deity. Of course, not all members of the Royal Arch wear Chapter ties, but they do all wear Chapter jewels. *(points out different ribbons among attendees if possible)*



The ribbons on the jewels denote seniority, white *[Click]* being the colour used on entry into the Order, *[Click]* while red

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denotes that the Companion has been through the chairs in a Chapter. *[Click]* The tri-coloured ribbon is worn by Grand Officers and holders of Provincial Grand Ranks.

MM: I haven't looked too closely at a jewel worn by someone else, but am I right in thinking the design is made up of circles and triangles, which are engraved with words and phrases?

PM: The jewel is very interesting. Here, have a closer look at one *(PM and MM both stand together, PM takes it from his pocket and hands to the MM)*

[Slide 6]

The jewel symbolises in a condensed form what Freemasonry teaches. You can see it has a very detailed design, and you should note that the jewel is double-sided. *[Click]* The two circles represent the Deity and Eternity. *[Click]* The interlaced triangles represent the spiritual and material nature of man.

MM: What are the inscriptions on the jewel? They are quite hard to read.

PM: A detailed explanation of the various inscriptions can be discovered when a Brother enters the Royal Arch, but let's look at just one for a moment. On the scroll at the bottom

[Click] on the front face of the jewel, in capitals, is the Latin 'NIL NISI CLAVIS DEEST' (nil nigh-sy clavis day-est), which means 'Nothing is wanting but the key'.



You can see *[Click]* a triple tau as well in the centre of the scroll. None of the inscriptions on the jewel will mean much to you at the moment, but they will mean something to those here tonight who are already Royal Arch Masons. Essentially they contain messages intended to help a Companion come to know himself better and guide him towards a contemplation of his relationship to the Supreme Being. *(takes back jewel and replaces in breast pocket; brethren in the Lodge follow).*

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MM: I think your various explanations might also be starting to answer my other important question, which is: what is the Master Mason is therefore missing by not being a member of the Royal Arch?

PM: The essential point about the Craft and the Royal Arch is that, while the Craft teaches us mainly about our responsibilities and relationships to our fellow men, the Royal Arch impresses on our minds the relationship we bear to the Supreme Being and helps us to contemplate our own mortality in the light of eternity. By trying to come to terms with the inevitability of death, a mason can gain a valuable perspective on the fleeting nature of life and his relationship with his God. For this important reason the Royal Arch is considered both the completion and the climax of pure Ancient Freemasonry.

MM: But am I not right in thinking that there are some pointers to the RA in the Craft ceremonies?

PM: There are a few, but they are often missed, or not fully understood, unless one listens very carefully to the ritual when it is being delivered in a Lodge.

MM: Ok – tell me about it then.

PM: Essentially the Craft and Royal Arch link may be interpreted as moving from darkness to light by striving for a higher level of understanding of our relationship to the Supreme Being. You will remember that at your Initiation you were admitted in a state of darkness and restored to light after your obligation. Indeed, you were restored to the blessing of 'material light'.

The Royal Arch ceremony literally sheds greater light on what is being taught. It is the next natural step for Craft Mason and it can give a more spiritual dimension to his overall Masonic experience. Indeed, candidates entering the Royal Arch do so while wearing their Craft aprons for the greater part of the Exaltation ceremony.

MM: I suppose that, in the early days, it would have been logical to progress a Mason through the Craft degrees and then fairly quickly through the Royal Arch, a bit like taking another degree?

PM: Yes, at that time it was a rapid progression. Interestingly, in the early 1800s there was a Passing the Veils Ceremony which was worked as a preliminary to the Ceremony of Exaltation. Today in England the ceremony is solely authorised for use in Chapters in Bristol but it is still very much part of the Royal Arch system in Ireland, the United States of America and in Scotland. However, in the recent

past, the Royal Arch did make reference to a fourth degree. The old Royal Arch ritual books used to have a passage which said the candidate might have imagined that he had taken a fourth degree, but then explained that, in fact, it was the Master Mason's completed. Perhaps *names* *Narrator* can help here.

Narrator: *(stands)* This goes some way to explaining why the Royal Arch has been described as a degree which is more august, sublime and important than those which precede it (namely the three Craft degrees) and why it is considered the summit and perfection of Antient Masonry. Candidates for the Royal Arch have to give basic proofs of their proficiency in the Craft before being admitted and today it is as much a readiness of mind as a demonstration of ability that qualifies us all to attain this completion and climax of our Craft experience.

The Royal Arch is often referred to as a beautiful Order. This is partly because the regalia has striking colours, but also because the story and actions in the ritual are both interesting and absorbing. *(sits)*

PM: Have you seen any Royal Arch regalia?

MM: Yes. I've seen the aprons and other bits and pieces in the display windows in the regalia shops and on the Provincial website.

PM: As it happens, I have my Royal Arch regalia with me in my case here. Let me show it to you. *(Goes to his case, brings out his apron and sash, and returns to the MM to show them to him)*. The colours are very striking, blue representing Craft Masonry and crimson the Royal Arch. The irradiated form signifies sacredness. The combination of the apron, sash and jewel makes a Companion very distinctive when wearing his regalia. *(Puts regalia back in case)*.



MM: Yes. I can see that, but what can you tell me about the story used in the ritual, or is this only revealed when you join, as happens in a Lodge?

PM: There are some aspects that are special to the ceremony, but I can tell you that the drama of the ritual is drawn from the events surrounding [\[Click\]](#) the rebuilding of the Temple at Jerusalem by Zerubbabel and his Companions after their return from captivity in Babylon. It is centred on the discovery of a hidden vault by three labourers sent to clear

the ground in preparation for this work. The lessons of the Royal Arch are derived from the working of this story.

MM: I'm afraid I'm not very knowledgeable on Old Testament history. When was the Temple destroyed and why did the labourers come from Babylon?

PM: Perhaps the names *Narrator* can explain.

Narrator: (*stands*) King Solomon's Temple was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, about 400 years after being built. The people of Jerusalem were then exiled to Babylon, a city in ancient Mesopotamia. Some 70 years later, when Cyrus, King of Persia, began his reign over the region, he let the Israelitish nation return to their native land.



He thought that he would be better served by having willing subjects working in their own countries, rather than held as prisoners in Babylon. To the Jewish people this seemed as if a prophecy of Isaiah was being fulfilled. *(sits)*

MM: OK this work then? What is the message that it delivers?

PM: Well, I don't want to give too much of the story away *(Include this part of the sentence if EA or FC are present: "or to spoil anything for those who have not taken their second or third degree in the Craft yet")* but our experiences in the Royal Arch help to guide us to a greater understanding of our nature, and of our relationship with our God, and particularly to come to terms with our own mortality.

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MM: You have given me a great deal to think about. I can see that we can only understand fully all the implications of Masonic ceremonies after a long period of thought. It seems to me to be a moral code that helps us develop throughout our whole life and I can now see why the Royal Arch is the next stage beyond the Craft. But can you tell me the procedure for joining and what the immediate expectations and commitments are? Would I find it very different from a Craft Lodge?

PM: Entry into the Order is open to all Master Masons of four weeks standing and is conferred by a single ceremony, called an Exaltation. Members are referred to as Companions, rather than Brethren, as you commented earlier, but generally you will find things much the same as you experience in the Craft.

MM: What about the time commitment?

PM: Chapters usually meet three or four times a year. In terms of ongoing regular practice evenings, these are usually much less. Otherwise, your ritual experience will be very similar to that in the Craft.

MM: What about taking an office in Chapter? I'm still on the floor in my Lodge and wouldn't want to take on too much.

PM: Your rate of progress through the Chapter offices depends upon the amount of time and effort you are able and prepared to give. At one time appointment to the senior Chapter offices was not possible until you had been Master in a Lodge, but that rule has now been relaxed.

However, many Companions still want to complete most, if not all, of the progressive offices in their Lodge before moving through those in Chapter. This can allow them to concentrate their efforts at a more relaxed and enjoyable pace and means they are better grounded in Craft matters before embarking on the RA offices.

There are others who can see real advantages in starting to move through the Chapter offices early, particularly if it may be some time before they will receive their first Craft appointment. As well as having a deeper understanding of Masonry, the experience gained in the Royal Arch can help them improve their performance when they finally take a Craft office.

MM: What about the financial commitment then as I don't to stretch myself?

PM: In terms of financial commitment, because of the fewer number of meetings and Supreme and Provincial Grand Chapter dues being lower than in the Craft, subscriptions are below those in the Craft. With regard to charitable donations, there are charity collections at meetings and sometimes raffles at festive boards, but, as in the Craft, your giving should be determined by your means, having regard to your personal and family commitments.

The Masonic Charities supported by the Royal Arch are the same as those in the Craft.

MM: You have whetted my appetite for this Order and I now need to think through what you have told me and perhaps only then will I be ready to ask some more questions. Are there any other people that I can talk to about the Royal Arch?

PM: Apart from your closest Masonic friends, the obvious people to speak to if you want to learn more about this beautiful Order, and how to join it, are the Royal Arch

Companions who are in your own Lodge. You can recognise them easily now – through their Royal Arch ties and from their jewels.



Companion



Excellent
Companion



Provincial or
Grand Officer

In addition, there are the Royal Arch Contacts in Lodges who hold special liaison roles to advise prospective Exaltees.

These can, if known, be identified or Perhaps those Brothers would stand now so that I can introduce you to him. Any of the brethren I have mentioned will, I am sure, be pleased to answer any further questions you may have.

The next question and answer should be adapted depending on whether there is a Chapter attached to the Lodge, a Chapter(s) which usually received members of the Lodge, or there is no formal or informal link with a Chapter.

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MM: Is it preferable to join the Chapter that is associated with this Hall or Group ?

PM: Not necessarily. The choice is yours. Some brethren like to stay among the Lodge members they know; others like to spread out and meet new faces.

It obviously helps if they can find friends in another Chapter outside their own Hall or Group, but, again, they will find help on hand to seek out a suitable Chapter to join, and if necessary identify a proposer and seconder. More importantly, it is the Royal Arch Contact who should be able to supply you with the appropriate application form for joining!

MM: That's been very helpful. You have given me much to think about and I appreciate the explanations you have given – and also the history lesson!

PM: I said earlier, all the members of the Royal Arch here at the moment would welcome the opportunity to lead anyone to the completion of their Masonic experience. All he has to do is ask.



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PM: Please take this leaflet away with you to read at your leisure. I hope it gives a sense of how enjoyable the Royal Arch is.

Take the next Step

Join the Royal Arch

- Entered Apprentice
- Fellowcraft
- Master Mason
- Royal Arch

Only in taking the fourth and ultimate step in Masonry by joining the Royal Arch can a Craft Freemason become complete.

Contact your Group Royal Arch lead or Lodge contact to find out how.

Narrator: *SLIDE 8 (stands)*

WM, thank you for letting us use the time at this meeting to help make an advancement in Masonic knowledge. We will now be happy to attempt to answer any questions the Brethren may have.

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