

*Saint John's of Jerusalem Chapter 203  
Bicentenary Convocation  
Liverpool Masonic Hall - Saturday 14 September 2024*



Wednesday 28 July 1824 was a significant day in Liverpool Royal Arch Masonry as companions gathered at Liverpool Masonic Hall to attend the consecration convocation of Saint John's of Jerusalem Chapter No 203.

The chapter is second only in seniority to Jerusalem Chapter No 32 in the Liverpool Group and is the 4th senior chapter in the Province, Jerusalem Chapter No 32 (1792); Holy Royal Architect Chapter No 314 (1803) and Royal Preston Chapter No 333 (1821) having been consecrated previously. The chapter has a long and distinguished record of service to Royal Arch Freemasonry in general and the Province in particular, attracting companions from various walks of life throughout its existence.

And so it came to pass, that on Saturday 14 September 2024, following in the footsteps of those companions who had long gone before, that the chapter companions and their guests gathered once again in The Egyptian Room at Liverpool Masonic Hall in celebration of reaching the chapter bicentenary.

On this very special 'milestone' in the history of the chapter, the companions of the Chapter were honoured to receive the Grand Superintendent Mark Matthews.

He was accompanied by the Deputy Grand Superintendent Chris Butterfield, the Second Provincial Grand Principal Michael Threlfall and Third Provincial Grand Principal David Barr and the Liverpool Assistant to the Provincial Grand Principals Ian Sanderson

Also in attendance were three Assistants to the Provincial Grand Principals, Paul Hesketh, Malcolm Alexander and John Murphy.

They in turn were accompanied by the Deputy Grand Superintendent of Dumbartonshire, Robert Sawers, Past Second Provincial Grand Principal, John Hutton and two Past Assistants to the Provincial Grand Principals, Paul Shepherd and Samuel Robinson.

A further nine grand officers were in attendance together with numerous Provincial grand officers and guests were present making a total attendance of 82. When all were seated in the chapter room, a colourful and unique room in the Province, it was a resplendent dash of Royal Arch colour.



### **The Egyptian Room, Liverpool Masonic Hall**

A unique style and the finest example of its kind in the Province having been designed by Liverpool University and Museum Egyptologists. The chapter continues its support for The Liverpool Masonic Hall with donations to the Building Fund for the maintenance and improvement of the facilities.

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After the Provincial Team were rehearsed by the Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies Ian Halsall and his two deputies, Gary Smith and Robbie Fitzsimmons, all was set for the much-anticipated opening of the chapter at 1:00pm prompt.

The three principals, Stephen John Dovaston (first principal), Oliver Winder (second principal) and Raymond Parr (third principal) opened the chapter. The Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies then announced that the Grand Superintendent was without and demanded admission. Never ones to disappoint, he was admitted in due form accompanied by the grand and acting Provincial grand officers.

Having been welcomed by the chapter principals, the Mark took the chair and sceptre of the chapter and opened Provincial Grand Chapter. After his opening remarks the Provincial Grand Scribe Ezra Peter Taylor, read aloud the Bicentenary Charter, which was then presented, together with a bicentenary jewel to the chapter first principal, at which point permission was granted for the chapter companions to proudly display their own bicentenary jewel.

Clerk in Holy Orders, Canon the Reverend Godfrey Hirst addressed the assembled companions, delivering a thought-provoking oration peppered with light humour, even managed to include 'Winnie the Pooh' and him playing 'Pooh Sticks'! He then led the companions in offering thanks for the life and work of the chapter and a prayer of rededication for the future 200 years.

The National Anthem was sung after which the chapter principals reoccupied their seats. The first principal thanked the Grand Superintendent for attending on this special occasion and presented him with a list of 10 charities who had received donations from the chapter prior to the convocation – the chapter's way of thinking being it's better than sitting in our bank until today!

The Most Excellent Grand Superintendent informed all present of the magnificent donations made by the Chapter totalling **£7500.00p** to:

**The 'Friends of Tithebarn' £750.00p**

The Friends of Tithebarn are undertaking two projects, a 'Sensory Graden' and a shop fit out in the Bistro Room.



### Guide Dogs for the Blind £750.00p

The dogs to be trained and placed in Liverpool homes.  
The Sponsored Dogs – left to right-Guinness; Ismay; Nicki and Rodney, April 2024.



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### LimbPower UK £750.00p

to assist in the rehabilitation of ex-service personnel amputees in re-building and adjustment in their lives through physical, social and mental well-being.



**'The Liverpool Blood Bike' £750.00p**

Separate from the original appeal and to be used to maintain the vehicle.  
The Liverpool Blood Bike at work – outside The Royal Liverpool Hospital and  
The Clatterbridge Cancer Centre Liverpool, 12 July 2024



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**Liverpool Masonic Hall Building Fund £750.00p**

for the continuing upkeep of the building including the magnificent room in which this meeting was held.



**Merseyside Water Rescue £750.00p**

Merseyside Water Rescue – last night of the Eurovision Song Contest 2023, Royal Albert Dock, Liverpool. Their role is expanding to cover Bramley Moore Dock, home of Everton FC from 2025 season. The chapter has previously made a donation to enhance their communications equipment



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**North West Air Ambulance £750.00p**

The North West Air Ambulance, Alder Hey Childrens Hospital Liverpool  
It might just keep it flying for another ½ hour!



**St John's Hospice Wirral- £750.00p**

The Saint John's Hospice, Wirral , April 2024

Sadly, where two companions of the chapter received care for which the chapter will be forever grateful. Thanks, on behalf of us all for the care of our two companions who have been recently called to higher service.



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**Southport Offshore Rescue Trust- £750.00p**

Southport Offshore Resue Trust, April 2024

Whilst we all hope that we may never need their services, there will always be those that do – an organization which relies on donations to continue the invaluable work of the volunteers who watch over those enjoying themselves to ensure their safety and when necessary, potentially risk their own lives to save those in difficulty.



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And Last but not Least, **West Lancashire Freemasons' Charity- £750.00p**  
Towards their continued good work for Masons and the community as a whole.

There was surprise and honour yet to come. David Sayce was called forward and presented to the Grand Superintendent, who thanked him for his long service in his various roles connected to both the chapter and Liverpool Masonic Hall and immediately proceeded to promote him to the rank of Past Provincial Deputy Grand Sword Bearer – a well-deserved appointment which was received with acclaim.

Before retiring, the Grand Superintendent, led the convocation in replenishing the chapter 'coffers', the charity collection raising some £282.65p after which the Grand Superintendent, grand, Provincial grand Officers and guests retired prior to the closing of the convocation, after which all companions gathered for a pre-dinner reception in the Main Banqueting Room of the hall.

A splendid 4 course meal, was washed down with copious amounts of wine and port, during which the companions once again gave generously to the raffle in aid of the Chapter Benevolent Fund to the tune of £470.

The toast to the Grand Superintendent being honoured, he rose to thank once again everyone for attending, making mention of the acting Provincial grand officers, for whom this was to be their last 'outing' prior to finishing their year of office. He also thanked the chapter for the beautiful flowers delivered to his wife Debbie as recognition of allowing him to come out to play again.

He assured the chapter, that as an honorary member he would wear this bicentenary jewel with pride and would try and visit whenever possible, dependant obviously on his other duties.

He now turned to proposing the toast to the chapter, wishing the companions the health to continue their efforts and promising to return when the chapter celebrates its 250th anniversary. The toast to the guests was received by the guests in the true traditions of Masonry, the first principal acknowledging their generosity of spirit

The chapter guests, and absent and seafaring companions were toasted before the Provincial Grand Janitor bade the assembled companions a safe journey home

All in all, a great day which hopefully will live long in the memory of all – it certainly will for the companions of Saint John's of Jerusalem Chapter!