



# *Provincial Grand Chapter of Warwickshire*

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## *An Introduction to the Chapter Officers*

This presentation is suitable for shared delivery by the Chapter Officers and each Officer stands to deliver a statement regarding his Office, as follows:

**Zerubbabel:** My name is Zerubbabel, Prince of the People, the son of Shealtiel, grandson of Jehoiachin penultimate King of Judah, a descendant of King David. Zerubbabel is a Hebrew name meaning “the one sown in Babylon”. As my name suggests, I was born in Babylon during the captivity and was chosen by Cyrus, King of Persia, to lead a group of the descendants of the exiles back to Canaan and become the Governor of Jerusalem in the first year of his reign, only to find that the city and Solomon’s Temple had been utterly destroyed when Nebuzaradan, Captain of the Guard to Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon attacked the city in 586 BCE. I am the First Principal of the Chapter and in conjunction with my colleagues Haggai and Joshua, rule over this Chapter. We are responsible for appointing suitable people to undertake the work and to reveal further Masonic knowledge to those who join us.

The colours of our robes are representative of the curtains or veils of the tabernacle described in the Book of Exodus. My robe is scarlet, which is an emblem of kingly dignity and my sceptre is surmounted by a crown, the emblem of sovereignty and a reminder of God’s omnipotence. At one time I also wore a turban with a triple crown, which was once part of the regular clothing. Whilst this custom survives in many Chapters in the United States it is seldom seen in English Chapters except in Bristol although SGC have recently authorised a presentation for delivery in Provinces.

**Haggai:** My name is Haggai, which means “my feast”, the second Principal of the Chapter. I am reputed to be one of the twelve minor prophets and the author of the Book of Haggai in the Old Testament. Little is known of my background, except that I was one of the first three prophets whose ministry belonged to that period of Jewish history which began after the return from captivity in Babylon. On my arrival in Jerusalem, I discovered that the re-building work had been suspended. It was through my efforts, encouragement and a prophesy that there would be pestilence and drought due to the failure of finishing the rebuilding of the temple that the people were roused from their lethargy and the work was resumed. My role thereafter was to act as scribe in the first Sanhedrin or Council of Elders in Jerusalem.

The Council of Elders originated in the wilderness when Moses was instructed to select 70 men to form a tribunal for judicial and administrative purposes. He was instructed to take them to the tabernacle to ‘receive the spirit’. On their return to the camp it was reported that two others, who had not been chosen by Moses, had also received a similar prophetic spirit, thus bringing the number to 72. This may well account for the use of the number 72 in the ritual and not 6 from each tribe which is the popular attribution.

The colour of my robe is purple, which is an emblem of union and is a reminder that the harmony of the Chapter should be my constant care.

The emblem on my sceptre is the ‘all seeing eye’, emblematical of the Great Overseer of the universe who’s eye neither slumbers or sleeps and serves as a reminder of God’s omnipresence. I also, at one time, wore a plain single crown, which formed part of the regalia worn by the second principal.

**Joshua:** My name is Joshua, son of Josedech. My name means ‘a saviour’. It was I and not my father who was chosen as the first High Priest of Israel. I presided at the time of the building of the second temple and the Third of the Three Principals who rule the Chapter. The colour of my robe is blue, one of the most beautiful and durable in nature and is representative of universal brotherhood and benevolence. In the early days, before the Union of the two Grand Chapters in 1817 I used to wear a breastplate called the ‘breastplate of righteousness’. It is described in great detail in the Book of Exodus. It was worn by the High Priest over the Ephod – a garment like a tabard, woven out of gold, blue, purple and scarlet threads. The breastplate had 12 precious stones engraved with the names of the 12 tribes of Israel, mounted in gold settings upon it. In Hebrew times the breastplate would have had a pouch or pocket which contained the Urim and Thummim. These stones were used as a kind of divine mediator, used by the High Priest to reveal the future. In early times I also wore the Mitre of the High Priest, whilst this is no longer worn by

Joshua in most Chapters, a miniature of the Mitre is mounted on my sceptre to remind you of the dignity of the office. On it are, or should be engraved the Hebrew characters – Kodesh lo Adoni, translated as 'Holiness to the Lord', the motto of the Grand Lodge of the Ancients and the password of the Crimson Veil, once part of the ceremony of Passing the Veils which, at one time, preceded the ceremony of exaltation.

**Scribe Ezra:** I am Ezra the Priest and Scribe who succeeded Joshua as High Priest and became a leading figure in the revival of Judaism in the land of Israel. I was the leader of the second group of descendents of the exiles from Babylon who arrived in Jerusalem some 23 years after the first exile had returned. It was I who was responsible for the religious revival of the people. I also formed the Men of the Great Assembly, one hundred and twenty leaders from every Jewish community in the world and reinforced Jewish law. The book of Ezra records the rebuilding of the temple, which is reported in detail and is also featured in the books of Haggai and Zechariah. Since this story is central to the Royal Arch, you may wish to consult it. My duty in the Chapter is that of Scribe, producing the minutes of our meetings etc similar in all respects to the duties of the Secretary of a Craft Lodge. I wear a white surplice, the dress of a preacher or teacher. It represents what was once the white curtain found at the end of the ceremony of the Veils and which separated the candidate from the Holy of Holies in which the three Principals were seated.

**Scribe Nehemiah:** Nehemiah was a 5th Century BC Jewish leader. I held a position of honour in the court of the Persian King – Artaxerxes the 1st. I became Artaxerxes Cup Bearer or Prime Minister and was appointed by the King as governor of Judea, with authorisation to rebuild the city of Jerusalem so that the people would be safe from the attacks from those who resented their return, a task of which it is said, was completed in an astounding 52 days. I also provided authentic leadership for Ezra's work. The rebuilding of the city and the reforms made during my administration are recounted in the book which bears my name. I also wear the white surplice of a teacher, my duties are to conduct the candidate on his entrance into the Chapter, assist Scribe Ezra to equip the men who were engaged to prepare the work in clearing the ground and, after their discovery, to prepare them for investiture.

**Principal Sojourner:** We three are Sojourners or Journeyman who arrive in Jerusalem as strangers with every intention of moving on in due course but on learning that the temple had been destroyed we offered our services in rebuilding the same and were given the task of clearing the ground for the foundations of the new building which proved pivotal in rediscovering the long lost secrets, offering the message that those employed on the lowly tasks may attain the highest honours through zeal and industry. We also wear white surplices and are normally seated in the West of the Chapter.

**First Assistant Sojourner:** The surplices or vestments of white linen worn by the Sojourners date back to at least 1778, when their use was first authorised by the first Grand Chapter. The Scribes surplices were probably adopted about the same period or even later and are developed from the alb, a linen vestment worn by priests of the Christian church since the third century and originate from Greek and Latin days. They are said to be 'emblematical of the renewal of man in justice and in the holiness of truth'.

**Second Assistant Sojourner:** It was during our labours that we made what we considered to be a most important discovery – The long lost volume of the sacred law and the word that was lost with the untimely death of Hiram Abif. We should not take the ritual too literally, as it is based more on legend than on fact. One thing is certain, not even in the darkest days of the Israelites was the name of GOD lost. But they had fallen into idolatry and had largely ceased to worship him. That word which was found signified a return to their belief in GOD and a realisation that JEHOVAH was not just the God of Israel; he was the God of all nations. It was a discovery that became woven into our Royal Arch legend, a legend that is meant to point the way and strengthen our belief in the True and Living God Most High.

(Three Companions all stand)

**Companion 1:** We are members of the Chapter, referred to as Companions of the Order. We are all wearing the regalia of a Companion of the Order, which comprises of a white lambskin Apron with a triangular overlap, around which is an indented border of crimson and purple (or dark blue). In the centre of the flap is a triangle of white silk with a gilt border and within the triangle, the emblem, of three taus, known as the triple tau united, in gilt embroidery. Below the flap are two tassels of gold or metal gilt suspended from white ribbons. When we eventually become Installed Principals, the white silk behind the triple tau and the white tassels on our aprons are changed to crimson. When we have occupied the three chairs we should, in time, become Provincial Grand Officers when the colours behind the triple tau and ribbons are changed from crimson to dark blue.

**Companion 2:** We also wear the crimson and purple indented sash or ribbon of the Order. The wearing of the sash over which shoulder in the Royal Arch has often caused and still causes much controversy and speculation. Worn over the right shoulder it could be said to be representative of a sword belt, but worn over the left shoulder it becomes a decorative badge of honour such as would be worn by a court official or a stole of the church priest and deacon which, right back to ancient days, was worn over the left shoulder, "in its mystical signification, represented the Yoke of Christ". However, whilst the sash in Royal Arch is worn over the left shoulder, there is ample evidence that, in the early days, it was worn over the right shoulder. The Charter of Compact of 1766 says every Companion shall wear the indented Ribbon or Sash of this Order, but doesn't indicate over which shoulder it should be worn. However, the Grand Chapter Regulations of 1778 do inform us that the "Ribbon is to be worn over the left shoulder" and there it has remained to this day.

A Royal Arch MS of about 1795 says that we wear the Ribbon "as Badges of Honour and Ensigns of our Order", which is at variance with the sword belt idea. It is also worth bearing in mind that from time immemorial it has been understood that English Masons should assemble without carrying any offensive or defensive weapon (remember your initiation). Up to 1813 notices for the Grand Festival invariably contained a reminder that "Brethren appear unarmed". J Heron Leper a former Librarian of the United Grand Lodge said that the sword and trowel are displayed in a Chapter as an incentive to diligence, labour and patriotism in defending our country, but as Royal Arch Masons, we do not carry them in celebrating our mysteries.

**Companion 3:** To complete the Royal Arch Regalia We all wear the jewel of the Order on our left breast. As it is an approved Jewel it can and should also be worn in a Craft Lodge to show that you are a member of this Supreme Degree. The jewel is worn suspended from a coloured ribbon, the colour of which indicates the progress the wearer has made in the Order. A white ribbon for Companions who have not yet reached any of the three principals chairs, which is changed to a crimson ribbon for those who are or have been installed in any of the three chairs, but have not yet been awarded Provincial Grand Rank. Those who are Provincial or Grand Officers, and who have previously been installed as Principals of the Chapter wear their jewel suspended from a Tri-coloured ribbon of dark blue, crimson and light blue ribbon.

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