



Province of East Kent

**HOLY ROYAL ARCH
CHAPTER
OF EAST KENT**

**Most Excellent Grand Superintendent
Michael R Bailey**

Now that you have been raised to the Sublime Degree of a Master Mason, you are eligible to be exalted into the Supreme Order of the Holy Royal Arch.

What is the Supreme Order of the Holy Royal Arch?

Known within the Craft as "The Chapter", it is the Order that completes pure and ancient Freemasonry which consists of three steps plus one - the Holy Royal Arch. The members of the Order are known as Companions and their Chapters are Masonic bodies attached to, but organised separately from, Craft Lodges.

What is its close connection and affinity with the Craft Degree?

Historically, prior to the Act of Union in December 1813, the Antients' Grand Lodge practised the "Royal Arch Degree" as an extension within the Master Mason's degree. Supreme Grand Chapter administers the Holy Royal Arch and its senior executive officers are always the same as those who hold the same or comparable offices in United Grand Lodge. In our own Province we have as our Grand Superintendent, Excellent Companion Michael Robin Bailey and he is of course also the Provincial Grand Master of the Provincial Grand Lodge of East Kent. In our Craft Lodges you will recognise members of the Holy Royal Arch as they wear their Royal Arch jewels – the only jewel of another Order which is permitted to be worn with Craft jewels in a Craft Lodge. These examples further demonstrate the close bond between the Craft and the Holy Royal Arch.

Why consider joining the Holy Royal Arch?

When you were initiated, you were taught the duties you owe to your fellow man and how to conduct your life in society; in particular, Charity was emphasised. In the Second Degree you were instructed to contemplate Morality and Equality. Then, when raised to the Sublime Degree of a Master Mason you were led to contemplate your inevitable destiny. In the Holy Royal Arch the Mason goes further to consider his relationship with his God and to explore the concepts of eternity and eternal life. In addition you will be able to pursue the Masonic legend to the conclusion of its initial stage – the manner of the recovery of the genuine secrets of a Master Mason.

When should I consider exaltation into the Holy Royal Arch?

First of all you must have been a Master Mason for at least four weeks, but then the timing of your decision is entirely a matter for you and whatever you feel comfortable with. It is worth mentioning that there should be no pressure for a member to progress through the various offices of the Holy Royal Arch unless he so wishes. Most new companions are happy just to attend, learn more about their Freemasonry and make new friends. Joining is the important thing.

What fulfilment would I achieve by becoming a member of the Holy Royal Arch?

The ultimate fulfilment is the experience of the companionship found and enjoyed within Chapters. It encompasses the deeper meaning of the tenets of the Craft and a meaningful relationship with our fellow Companions and Masons. It is only by being exalted into the Supreme Order of the Holy Royal Arch that you will be able to experience and appreciate for yourself the wonders of this intimate and most satisfying Order.

What is expected of me if I were to be exalted into the Holy Royal Arch?

Membership should not take up as much of your time as the Craft as, usually, Royal Arch Chapters meet only four times a year – with perhaps one rehearsal prior to each of those meetings (known as Convocations). Neither should it be expensive – as the joining and annual fees are also considerably less than those in the Craft. Your enthusiasm would hopefully encourage you to attend regularly. Progression in the Holy Royal Arch should not interfere with progression in the Craft – nevertheless you are enabled to take part in some of the various offices and ceremonial duties within the Chapter, if you so wish.

What is my commitment whilst I am attaining the Chair of my Craft Lodge?

Your first priority should be to attain the Chair of your Craft Lodge. However, you should always consider seeking further advancement within your Chapter, possibly leading to the three senior officers who are referred to as Principals. It should be mentioned here, that progression through the Principals' Chairs is no longer dependent upon being a Master or Past Master of a Craft Lodge, although it is to be preferred that a prospective Principal has had the benefit of being first installed into the Master's Chair.

How should I proceed?

Your Craft Lodge should have a "Holy Royal Arch Liaison Officer". He will be an experienced and knowledgeable Brother who will be delighted to discuss the matter further with you and answer your questions, address any concerns you may have etc and would continue this role even after you join. He will also be happy to recommend a particular Chapter or Masonic Centre that is most convenient or accommodating to your work and domestic arrangements. Some members like to join a Chapter which is actually attached to their Lodge and where they are well known, whereas others prefer to join at a different place entirely – which ever you choose, you will certainly make new friends.

Conclusion

The Supreme Order of the Holy Royal Arch is aptly described as being both the foundation and keystone of our whole Masonic structure and, if you put your mind to enjoying your Royal Arch Masonry as much as you do your Craft Masonry, then you will come to understand why it is considered to be such an important step for every Craft Freemason.



Published by the Provincial Grand Chapter of East Kent, January 2009