

Step Guide - Step 9: Introducing the Royal Arch

This Step follows the new Freemason's completion of the three degrees of Craft Freemasonry and looks at the Lodge's role in introducing him to the Royal Arch. An Introduction to the Members' Pathway explains the Pathway and how this Step fits within its framework.

The Relationship between the Craft and the Royal Arch

Within English Freemasonry there exists an indissoluble link between Craft Freemasonry and the Supreme Order of the Holy Royal Arch. Together they constitute "pure Antient Masonry", as defined in the preliminary declaration of the Act of Union that in 1813 created the United Grand Lodge of England (UGLE). The Master Mason's knowledge of pure Antient Masonry cannot be considered complete until he has been exalted as a Royal Arch Mason. Both UGLE's Board of General Purposes and Supreme Grand Chapter's (SGC) Committee of General Purposes have asked Brethren who are members of the Royal Arch to encourage Master Masons in their Craft Lodges to become Royal Arch Masons. Lodges that have Royal Arch Chapters attached are encouraged to remain in close touch with the Chapter and be familiar with its situation. For many years the Royal Arch was described as the completion of the Third Degree, which, as the Grand Master said in April 2004, "implies that neither the Third Degree nor the ceremony of Exaltation is complete, which is surely untrue." Today the Royal Arch is seen as the completion of the journey in pure Antient Freemasonry and all reference to it being the completion or an extension of the Third Degree has been removed from the ritual and other documents.

Why should a Master Mason choose to join the Royal Arch?

First, because of the indissoluble link between the Craft and Royal Arch as the two component parts of pure Antient Masonry.

Secondly, to complete the journey of a man from the practical principles taught in the Craft to the spiritual aspect of our nature, as explored in the Royal Arch.

The third reason is the ceremony of Exaltation itself, which is one of the most beautiful, colourful and thought provoking in Freemasonry and in which the genuine secrets, that were lost and substituted during the Master Masons' degree, are revealed.

The final reason is the companionship and enjoyment that comes from meeting a wider circle and from the increase in Masonic experience and knowledge.

When should we introduce the Royal Arch?

Whilst in many Provinces the newly made Master Mason is presented with his Grand Lodge Certificate and at the same time a joint letter from the Provincial Grand Master and Grand Superintendent it is felt that this is not the best time as the GLC should always be deemed more appropriate at that time. However an introductory welcoming letter introducing the Holy Royal Arch should be presented at another meeting by the RA representative during the 3rd rising. During the presentation it can be explained that, if pure Antient Freemasonry were considered to be a four-act play, Craft Freemasonry as practised in the Lodge covers the first three acts while Royal Arch Masonry as practised in the Chapter covers the fourth act and completes the journey of self-knowledge and self-discovery. Following this metaphor, other Orders can be considered to be additional story lines that examine different aspects of this journey and which can be joined according to interest and inclination. It is recommended that Master Masons who wish to extend their involvement in and understanding of Freemasonry should be encouraged to join the Royal Arch next and before

considering other Orders. It can be explained that the Royal Arch is the natural and next important step in Freemasonry.

When is the right time to join the Royal Arch?

Ideally a Master Mason will join before he is installed into the chair of his Lodge. No pressure should be applied to coerce a Master Mason to join the Royal Arch or any other Order. The decision and timing must be his and he should not feel that he is a second class Freemason if he chooses to delay joining or not to join at all. The Royal Arch may enhance his membership and enjoyment of the Craft but it is not essential to it.

The Royal Arch Representative - In many Lodges a Royal Arch Representative acts as the link between the Royal Arch and the Lodge. His role is to raise the profile of the Royal Arch, to act as a source of information about the Royal Arch and to foster relations with Royal Arch Chapters. Royal Arch Representatives keep the whole Lodge, and individual Master Masons especially, informed about the Royal Arch, promote the Order and encourage Master Masons to join a Chapter suitable for them if and when they are ready. Normally the Representative will be an experienced Royal Arch Mason who either belongs to a Chapter attached to the Lodge or to a Chapter that tends to draw its members from the Lodge. The method of appointment varies and in Wiltshire this is currently under review.

Effective Royal Arch Representatives have employed a number of methods. These include: -

- ensuring their names and contact details are listed on the Lodge summons
- presenting a letter from the Provincial Grand Master and Grand Superintendent to new Master Masons
- providing brief and regular reports on the activities of Royal Arch Chapters
- befriending Master Masons and showing interest in their progress
- identifying Chapters that are best suited to an interested Master Mason
- keeping a stock of Royal Arch application forms
- passing on details of Royal Arch events open to Master Masons and
- delivering short talks on the Royal Arch in open Lodge.

A Royal Arch Representative cannot be expected to work alone and will want the support of other officers and members of the Lodge. He will need to work closely with the Lodge Secretary, the Lodge Mentor and the proposers and seconders of newer members so as to ensure they are all adopting a coordinated approach. He will require some knowledge of local Chapters and their circumstances and expectations. This will help him to match Master Masons to the most appropriate Chapter, one that can meet the Master Mason's expectations and provide a Royal Arch experience suited to his needs.

Finally - It is worth noting that Master Masons who join the Royal Arch tend to remain members and become more involved in their Lodges than those who do not.