



A brief glance at the History of the Royal Arch Province of Wiltshire

a paper by

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125th Anniversary of the

Provincial Grand Chapter of Wiltshire

On

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150th Anniversary of the Provincial Grand Chapter of Wiltshire

This paper was brought up to date and enhanced in June 2020 by E Comp John Reid MEGS and
E Comp Mark Fuller PrGReg/Provincial Information & Communication Officer in conjunction
with the original author

Provincial Banner



The banner was dedicated on the 5th November 2002 at the 103rd Regular Convocation of the **Stonehenge Chapter No 6114**, meeting in Salisbury. The presiding and dedicating officer was the **Grand Superintendent E Comp Ian Jacobs**. All Chapters were represented and all contributed to the procurement of the banner.

The design brief for the new banner was;

- To give proper emphasis to the origins within Craft Freemasonry.
- To embody ties with the Provincial Grand Lodge of Wiltshire.
- To incorporate references to the Royal Arch Family of Chapters within Wiltshire.

The Craft origins are seen in the form of the coat of arms of the United Grand Lodge of England.

The close links with the Provincial Grand Lodge are continued in the use of the main symbols.

Around the coat of arms are added the number plates of the seventeen Chapter of the Royal Arch within Wiltshire, with room for one more when the moment arises.

The background colour is crimson or scarlet. The three main reasons for this:

- Of the three main colours laid down in Exodus 38 v.8, scarlet and blue/purple, the scarlet is the most important (chosen for Zerubbabel).
- In Numbers 4 v. 4, while all precious items were to be covered in a blue cloth, the protective outer layer enclosing them all – depicting the Provincial role – was to be scarlet.
- The facing colour of the banner of the principal tribe of Judah is also scarlet. This is the banner normally handed to those entering the Royal Arch as an Exalte.

The white horse represents those large and mysterious figures dominating our hillsides, the Wiltshire White Horses.

The Grand Superintendents chain and jewel are at the top and bottom to denote his authority over the Province.

The oration was delivered by **E Comp Michael John Wells Lee DepGSupt.**



In The Beginning . . .

It is that historic year that saw the birth of Nikolai Lenin, Harry Lauder and Marie Lloyd and the deaths of General Robert E Lee, Charles Dickens, and Alexander Dumas. The year also witnessed the first performance of Wagner's Die Walküre and Delibes ballet Coppelia.

Jules Verne published his Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea and more locally, W. G. Grace and his brothers founded the Gloucester Cricket Club. They say that all good feasts should start with grace; I hope you will not be disappointed with this one. The year of course is 1870.

This paper is the result of the gathering of information from many sources together with my own assessment for what it is worth. Whilst I do not therefore claim 100% accuracy, I don't think the result is too far from the truth.

The Provincial Grand Chapter of Wiltshire as we know it today was constituted on 6th July 1870 at a meeting of the Wiltshire Chapter, No 355.

There were three Chapters operating in the Province at that time namely: -

The Wiltshire Chapter No 453, (now 355)

Consecrated at Swindon on 13th May 1856

Elias de Derham Chapter, No 586

Consecrated at Salisbury on 31st October 1867 by E Comp J Grundy, Grand Superintendent in and over the Province of Dorset.

Chapter of Harmony, No 632 Consecrated at Trowbridge in 1869 by E Comp J Grundy, Grand Superintendent in and over the Province of Dorset.

The history of the development of Royal Arch Province of Wiltshire is, in my opinion, best explained through the character and influence of its various Grand Superintendents and it is with this in mind that this paper has been written.



Grand Superintendents in and over the Province of Wiltshire



1870 - 1873



Samuel Wittey

1875 - 1892



Rt Hon Lord Henry Frederick Thorne
SM, PC, DL

1892 - 1900



Rt Hon William Playdell-Bouverie
5th Earl of Radnor, PC, DL, JP

1901 - 1927



Rt Hon Jacob Playdell-Bouverie
6th Earl of Radnor, DL, CBE, MC, JP
Lord Lieutenant for Wiltshire

1927 - 1932



Major-General Thomas CP Caley
CB, CBE, MVO, DL, JP

1936 - 1938



Arthur C Jonas

1941 - 1952



Gerald E Thornton

1952 - 1967



Harry C Preater

1967 - 1985



Sydney C Cockayne

1985 - 1995



Frank Jowitt

1995 - 2008



Ian R Jacobs

2008 - 2015



David FJ Blanchard

2015 -



John C Reid



Samuel Wittey

1870 – 1873



Much of the early work in creating our Province was vested in **Wiltshire Chapter, No 355**. In 1869 Samuel Wittey, a well-known Solicitor and Mayor of Devizes, was simultaneously Second Principal of the Chapter of Harmony, No 632 at Trowbridge and Principal Sojourner of Wiltshire Chapter, No 355.

On 12th November 1869 the feasibility of forming a Provincial Grand Chapter was discussed. Contact with other Chapters had indicated that there was a desire to do so. It was agreed that an attempt should be made to achieve this objective with E Comp Wittey being the most acceptable candidate to be the first Grand Superintendent. Dispensation was sought from Supreme Grand Chapter and he was installed as First Principal of Wiltshire Chapter, No 355 in December of that year. Collectively the three chapters were now in a position to petition Supreme Grand Chapter for the appointment of Samuel Wittey as Grand Superintendent. This was acceded to and he was duly installed in Swindon in July 1870 by **E Comp John Hervey, Grand Scribe Ezra**.

He was not destined however to rule for long and died of a heart attack on 27th February 1873 receiving full Masonic honours at his subsequent funeral. His only notable activity was his very real attempt to obtain ritual uniformity in the Province.

Following his death, the Province was in abeyance until 1875.

Lord Henry Frederick Thynne
MP, PC, DL, JP
1875 – 1891

As with Samuel Wittey the appointment of a Grand Superintendent in those days was very much by agreement amongst the Chapters and a recommendation being made by them to Supreme Grand Chapter. Collectively, the Wiltshire Chapters clearly considered Lord Henry Thynne to be the most acceptable candidate.

Lord Henry was subsequently installed (by dispensation) as First Principal of Elias de Derham Chapter, No 586. Following his installation *“immediate steps were taken by all the Chapters to secure his appointment as Grand Superintendent and the consequent resuscitation of the Province”*. Such was the procedure used to appoint Lord Henry. He presided over this Province for sixteen years (1875 – 1890) and was, in my opinion, one of our finest Grand Superintendents. He certainly set the style and what a style!



Lord Henry was installed as Grand Superintendent on 3rd September 1875 again by **E Comp John Hervey, Grand Scribe Ezra**. The ceremony coincided with the dedication of the new Masonic Hall at Swindon. This hall had, hitherto, been known as the Victoria Assembly Rooms and still exists today. Until recently it was the Swindon Advertiser Office in Victoria Road. These premises were in use by the various Lodges in Swindon until 1898. The richly designed metal guards which covered the large arches at the top of the three front windows of the building are on permanent display at the Swindon Masonic Hall today. No less than 55 attended the banquet held at the Goddard Arms. The banquet fee of six shillings and sixpence (32½p) provided those dining with:

- *Ox-tail or clear soup*
- *Turbot & lobster sauce & fried soles*
- *Roast duck, sirloin of beef, calves head*
- *Roast chicken, boiled chicken, tongue & ham*
- *Haunch of venison, partridge & hare*
- *Plum pudding, sweets, and desert*
- *Champagne*

In his second year as Grand Superintendent, Prince Leopold (afterwards Duke of Albany), brother of the Prince of Wales attended the Annual Convocation held at Salisbury.

The fact that Lord Henry's Scribe Ezra, Treasurer and Director of Ceremonies served him for most of his Superintendency in office enabled him to put the Province on a very sound footing. Hitherto the Annual Convocation of the Province was held within the meeting of a private Chapter. In 1879 Lord Henry decided that the Provincial Grand Chapter should be an independent Chapter. That is to say that its meetings would be held under the banner of a host Chapter but no longer part of the host Chapter's agenda.

In 1881 the Thynne Chapter, No 1478 was consecrated at the Town Hall, Warminster by **E Comp Col. Shadwell Clerke, Grand Scribe Ezra**. Clearly Lord Henry was delighted that the first Chapter to be consecrated after establishing Provincial Grand Chapter should be in Warminster and bear his family name.

Since this Chapter was destined to fail it was somewhat unfortunate that this happened in 1902, two years before his death in 1904.

On the 10th December 1883 Lord Henry consecrated the **Methuen Chapter, No 1533** at Marlborough. Interestingly, this Chapter appears to have been named after the Provincial Grand Master at the time, namely Frederick Henry Paul, 2nd Lord Methuen.

Most Wiltshire Companions may not be aware that the **Chapter of Harmony, No 663** was originally based at Trowbridge and was attached to the **Lodge of Concord, No 632**. In March 1883 that Chapter was in trouble. The majority of its members came from Devizes as did most of its potential candidates. In addition, attendances were poor. It was therefore proposed to remove the Chapter to Devizes, which was agreed. In May that year Trowbridge Companions did attempt a rear-guard action to resist the move but failed. The last meeting was held in Trowbridge on 21st November 1883. In 1887 a proposition was put to Supreme Grand Chapter to attach the Chapter to the **Wiltshire Lodge of Fidelity, No 663** which was acceded to and in November 1887 the Chapter became known as **Chapter of Harmony, No 663**. This decision seems to have spurred the Trowbridge Companions into action and, happily for all, Lord Henry consecrated a new Chapter there on 7th February 1888 styled the **Chapter of Concord, No 632**.

During his sixteen years as Grand Superintendent Lord Henry never missed a Provincial Convocation until 1889. His state of health had caused him to move to Brighton and he was unable to attend that year as his carriage had broken down en route.

Whilst membership of his Province is not recorded for 1875, by 1891 he was able to boast a Provincial membership of 151 companions. Commencing with three Chapters, he had supervised the consecration of another three bringing his Chapter strength to six. Illness finally caused his resignation in 1890. His health obviously improved as he went on to outlive his successor until his eventual demise in 1904.

William, 5th Earl of Radnor

PC, DL, JP

1892 – 1900



In 1892 the First Grand Principal, HRH the Prince of Wales, saw fit to appoint William Pleydell-Bouverie, 5th Earl of Radnor, Viscount Folkstone, Baron Longford, Baron Bouverie etc. as third Grand Superintendent in and over the Province of Wiltshire. He was at the same time Installed as Provincial Grand Master. The Installation took place on 27th September at the Masonic Hall, Victoria Street, Swindon. The Installing Officer was **Most Excellent Companion W W B Beach MP, Third Grand Principal.**

A personal banner was designed, made, and presented to Lord Radnor in 1894. The banner design recognised his holding simultaneously the offices of Grand Superintendent and Provincial Grand Master. It now hangs over the Junior Wardens pedestal in the Salisbury temple. It was made by a Mr Moring whose father had made the personal banner for Frederick Henry Paul, 2nd Baron Methuen now hanging in the Swindon temple. Nothing dramatic occurred during the Superintendency of William, Earl of Radnor. He seemed permanently at war with his Chapter Scribes over their Provincial returns. There were no consecrations and Provincial membership appears to have dropped from 153 to 120. He died in Office in 1900.

Jacob, 6th Earl of Radnor
CIE, CBE, VD, ADC, JP
1901 – 1926

Never was there a Grand Superintendent who started his period of office with as much pomp and ceremony as did Jacob, 6th Earl of Radnor, Viscount Folkstone etc. etc., son of the previous Earl. He was installed both as Grand Superintendent and Provincial Grand Master by his brother-in-law the **Earl of Lathom, Grand Superintendent in and over the Province of West Lancashire** on Wednesday 3rd July 1901 at the Assembly Rooms, Salisbury. Newspapers declared that some two to three hundred masons were present. At the end of the ceremony a procession of Grand and Provincial Grand lodge officers (in full Masonic dress) was formed and marched to the site of the new Masonic Hall in Crane Street where the Grand Superintendent proceeded to lay the foundation Stone. A banquet was afterwards held at the Council Chamber.



At Provincial Grand Chapter in 1902 the Grand Superintendent reported with regret the aforementioned demise of the **Thynne Chapter, No 1478** at Warminster. This had reduced the number of Chapters in the Province to five. Four years later in 1906 following the Annual Convocation of Provincial Grand Chapter held at the Town Hall, Malmesbury, Lord Radnor was no doubt pleased to restore the previous position by consecrating the **St Aldhelm Chapter, No 2888**.

Provincial Grand Chapter met regularly at various towns in the Province until 1912 when meetings were suspended until 1916. During this period nothing happened worthy of comment. The Grand Superintendent did have one significant achievement to his credit insofar as he had progressively reduced dining costs at the Annual Convocation to 6/6 to 2/6. No mean feat in those days. When Annual Convocations resumed again in 1916, they were presided over by various senior companions of the Province. Lord Radnor, being on active service in India was unable to resume his Masonic duties in the Province until 1919.

In 1921 Lord Radnor must have been delighted to **re-consecrate the Thynne Chapter, No 1478**. The ceremony took place following the Annual Convocation of Provincial Grand Chapter held at Warminster that year. From that point until his resignation in 1926 nothing of great moment occurred in the Province. During his time in office, which lasted 25 years, he consecrated two Chapters and took the numerical strength of the Province from 158 to 344 companions. During the same period, in his capacity as Provincial Grand Master, he consecrated six Craft Lodges.

Major-General Thomas Charles Pleydell Calley
CB, CBE, MVO, DL, JP
1927 – 1932



For the next four years the Province was placed under the rule of Major General Thomas C. P. Calley. Unusually he was installed by his predecessor, **Jacob, Earl of Radnor**, at Devizes Town Hall on 15th October 1927.

Unfortunately, his early death in 1932 precluded his making any lasting impression on the Province. He was at the same time Provincial Grand Master and did in fact consecrate one Craft lodge. During his Superintendency the numerical strength of the Province grew to 423.

A new Grand Superintendent was not appointed and installed until four years later and during this time the Province was ably ruled by the **Second Provincial Grand Principal, E Comp F J Bates**; he died in 1936 and one can be forgiven for wondering if this event finally stirred Supreme Grand Chapter into action.

Arthur Charlton Jonas

1936 – 1938

When Supreme Grand Chapter finally decided upon a successor to Maj-General Calley it selected Arthur Charlton Jonas the then Deputy Provincial Grand Master.

Unfortunately, he too was never in a position to bring his influence to bear. During this period, H.R.H. George, Duke of Kent, (father of the current First Grand Principal) was Provincial Grand Master, the commitments of whom would have placed a heavy burden on his Deputy. His installation by **M E Comp the Rev. Hubert Curtis, Third Grand Principal**, took place on 27th March at the new Masonic premises at Warminster.

At that meeting Provincial Grand Chapter agreed to spend £15.15.0 on purchasing a Chain of Office for the newly installed Grand Superintendent.

Ill-health forced him to resign his office in 1938, but during those four years he had been able to consecrate the **Lansdowne Chapter of Unity, No 626** at Chippenham and raise the Provincial membership to 443.



Gerald E Thornton

1940- 1952



Provincial Grand Chapter did not meet in 1939 or 1940 due to what was recorded as 'the National Emergency'. A bit of an understatement I venture to suggest! In 1940 Supreme Grand Chapter again appointed a Deputy Provincial Grand Master, in the person of E Comp Gerald E Thornton, to be Grand Superintendent. In 1939 the **Provincial Grand Master, H.R.H. George, Duke of Kent had been appointed Grand Master and thereby First Grand Principal**. Not surprisingly therefore a '*special*' meeting of Provincial Grand Chapter was held at Freemasons Hall, London on 30th April 1941 for the express purpose of enabling His Royal Highness to install E Comp Thornton as Grand Superintendent.

It is fascinating to note that at the subsequent Annual Convocation of Provincial Grand Chapter held a few days later reference was made to the state of the Provincial Robes. It was agreed that Province would prevail on the good nature of the host Chapters to provide robes until after the war. It was fortuitous, as it turned out, that no reference was made to which war!

E Comp Thornton was to remain as Grand Superintendent until 1952. The minutes of the period show nothing of particular note save two items. Firstly, he refers to official Provincial visits to Chapters in the Province (now commonplace) and secondly to the consecration of the **Chapter of Friendship and Unity, No 1271**, at Bradford-on-Avon on 17th May 1947.

Gerald Thornton appears to have been very much an administrative Grand Superintendent – he died suddenly in 1952. During the twelve years of his time in office he increased the number of Chapters in the Province to nine and the numerical strength from 443 to 587.

Harry Charles Preater JP 1952 – 1967

On the 18th day of October 1952, no less than the **Most Excellent First Grand Principal, Rt. Hon the Earl of Scarborough** attended the Town Hall, Swindon for the purpose of installing E Comp Harry C Preater as Grand Superintendent.

The occasion was marked by the presentation of a Provincial Royal Arch Banner which had been made by the wife of **E Comp J T Griffiths** of the Lansdowne Chapter of Unity, No 626. This was the first banner; there have been others since of course. Some 171 companions attended the banquet following the installation.

E Comp Preater was simultaneously Deputy Provincial Grand Master, Grand Superintendent and Provincial Grand Master of Mark Masonry in the Province. Besides owning and running a successful car dealership and garage in Swindon he was also Chairman of the Bench. Clearly a busy man, it seems hardly surprising therefore that apart from the celebration of the **Centenary of the Wiltshire Chapter, No 355** and the **Jubilee of the St Aldhelm Chapter, No 2888** (both during 1956) the next fifteen years were remarkable for their inertia – quite simply nothing happened. There were no consecrations and the numerical strength of the Province remained fairly static. Harry C Preater presided for the last time at the Annual Convocation in 1965; illness causing his eventual resignation in 1967.



Sidney Charles Cockayne

1968 – 1985



They say that *'cometh the hour, cometh the man'*. At this, arguably the lowest point in our history there strode centre stage *'one of the brightest characters'* ever recorded in the annals of Wiltshire masonry – namely one E Comp Sydney Charles Cockayne. Those of us who were privileged to know him will remember that he was, by appearance, a small man who never failed to impress Companions with his genuine affection for them and his enormous knowledge of masonry. He was of course a giant amongst Freemasons – thoroughly dedicated to Royal Arch Masonry in general and the Province of Wiltshire in particular.

Many neighbouring Provinces would also have good reason to be grateful for his help and advice. As E Comp Basil Gillam, the much loved and admired late Grand Superintendent of Dorset once stated, *'Sydney Cockayne was a Grand Superintendent's Grand Superintendent'*. As one very revered and nameless West of England Grand Superintendent told me on my first appointment to Director of Ceremonies of the Province *'we only*

have two rules on the chain circuit and they are that we take little instruction from London and that Sydney Cockayne was king'! He was installed at the City Hall, Salisbury on 29th May 1968 by the then **Second Grand Principal, Most E Comp Rt. Hon the Earl Cadogan**. How fortunate we were.

During the early years of his Superintendency, the numerical strength of the Province, due no doubt to the aforementioned inertia, started to decline. By 1975 he had stopped the rot by embarking on a programme of Provincial rejuvenation. He wrote a highly successful Royal Arch recruitment leaflet which remained in use for many years. He adopted a policy of visiting all his Chapters regularly to fire the enthusiasm of his Province and to motivate and encourage the younger companions. In so doing he came to know almost all the members of his Province personally and garnered their affection in doing so. He believed that smaller Chapters were necessary to create opportunities for younger Companions to progress. Indeed he set about this objective with tremendous gusto consecrating the **Stonehenge Chapter, No 6114** at Salisbury in 1977, the **St Edmund Chapter, No 4714** at Calne in 1981, the **Gooch Chapter, No 1295** at Swindon in 1982 and the **Border Chapter, No 3129** at Ludgershall in 1984 to achieve same.

On his retirement in 1984 his Province contained thirteen very happy Chapters and the numerical strength had risen to 697. More importantly the trend was now firmly in an upwards direction. To a large extent he had purged the Province of its complacency and laid the foundations for the future. He certainly built a successful Provincial team and at the age of 92, when he retired, had lost none of his original verve, setting an extremely high standard for his successors.

Frank Jowitt 1985 – 1995

To corrupt Shakespeare - *‘Now was this happy Spring made glorious Summer by a son of York’*. The Province was again fortunate in their next appointment. Once again it was to be ruled by a Companion thoroughly dedicated to the Royal Arch Province of Wiltshire.

At Chippenham on the 24th July 1985 the **Second Grand Principal, Most Excellent Companion Edward Latham Baillieu** was pleased to install E Comp Frank Jowitt as Grand Superintendent. E Comp Jowitt, a former Headmaster, had served his predecessor as Second Principal for four years, Third Principal for one year and as Director of Ceremonies for three years. In many respects he was the best trained of all the Grand Superintendents.

He was to build on the policies of his predecessor. He believed strongly that Provinces should have a constructive policy giving opportunities for the development of new initiatives within an established framework of disciplines. He created a first-class management structure with every office underpinned by one or more candidates. I doubt if this Province has ever been stronger and this was largely due to his planning. In 1989 he appointed for the first time a Deputy Grand Superintendent in the person of that great stalwart E Comp John Morgan who had held the post of Provincial Scribe Ezra for many years.



E Comp Jowitt's period in office which lasted until 1995 was a constant bustle of activity. *Vide hoc Locum* – watch this space – he used to say. This was in many ways the key to his success. He supervised the consecration of three Chapters – the **Chapter of Agriculture, No 9090** at Chippenham in 1987 now meeting at Corsham, the **Wiltshire Chapter of First Principals, No 6731** again at Chippenham in 1988 and the **Highworth Chapter, No 9009** at Swindon in 1991.

Mention should be made of the **Chapter of Rectitude, No 335**. Work on founding this most unusual of Chapters began under E Comp Frank Jowitt's time in office. The idea had been developed by E Companions Frank Jowitt, Ian Jacobs and myself. I wrote the initial paper entitled *“Bridge that Gap”* which E Comp Frank Jowitt circulated to other Provinces. Subsequently, a discussion meeting was held between all the interested Provinces at Keynsham in Somerset and I had the privilege of being elected Chairman of the Founders committee.

Sundry Provincial Church Service and the **Centenary of the Chapter of Concord No 632** were just some of the many events that were to mark *‘this age of enlightenment’*. At the start of Superintendency the numerical strength of the Province was 697 and at the end it had grown to 848 with sixteen Chapters.

Ian Robert Jacobs 1995 – 2008



On 24th May 1995 the **Most Excellent Third Grand Principal, The Rev Peter Hemingway** installed E Comp Ian Robert Jacobs as Grand Superintendent. This was a very different period than hitherto. For some years concern had been expressed with regards to the problems any successor to E Comp Frank Jowitt would have to face. It was determined that such an appointment was something of a poisonous chalice simply because little other than banner dedications remained to be achieved. More importantly the economic climate had changed; Companions were more interested in securing their working career than developing their Masonic career. Membership was falling across all degrees and all Provinces. Indeed, in some parts of the country warrants were being surrendered. It was considered successful to maintain the status quo which the Province under E Comp Jacobs succeeded in doing.

It was impossible to maintain the principle of *vide hoc locum*. Nevertheless, the Province celebrated the 125th Anniversary on 14th September 1995 when this '*paper*' was first delivered.

There was of course the outstanding consecration of the **Chapter of Rectitude, No 335** to be completed. After many meetings held at Keynsham the Chapter was finally consecrated by **E Comp Michael Higham, RNVR, Grand Scribe Ezra** at Chippenham on 5th March 1997. E Comp Ronald Discombe, Grand Superintendent in and over the Province of Devonshire was Installed as the First Principal, E Comp Thomas Hughes, Grand Superintendent in and over the Province of Somerset as Second Principal and E Comp Leslie Longbotham, Grand Superintendent in and over the Province of Berkshire as Third Principal.

Interestingly, E Comp Higham had also consecrated the **Wiltshire Chapter of First Principals, No 6731**. It is further interesting to note that of the 17 Chapters in the Province three were consecrated by Grand Scribe Ezras.

David Frederick James Blanchard

2008 – 2015

On 31 May 2008, **E Comp David Kenneth Williamson, Past Third Grand Principal** installed E Comp David Frederick James Blanchard as the 12th Most Excellent Grand Superintendent in and over the Province of Wiltshire. Dare I say it was inevitable that a Blanchard would get there at some time! Contrary to popular belief he is not my son, or my brother or my father!

Companions the job is no sinecure. At all times a Grand Superintendent has to be all things to all Companions. He has to travel extensively, year after year and in all weathers motivating us all as he does so. Believe me it is no pleasure crossing Salisbury Plain in January when mist, fog and ice abound, and he may have to do these four or five times a month ever smiling in the process.

E Comp Blanchard could not have taken on his Superintendency at a more difficult time, the country was still in financial difficulty having been in recession for 12 months. Then late in 2008 the first austerity measures were introduced, in 2010 a full austerity programme was initiated, these measures had detrimental effects on the membership and potential candidates, for many disposable income was in short supply. Undeterred E Comp Blanchard continued to strive in taking the Province forward.

Following the death of a family member he set about raising funds for the McMillan Nurses, presenting them with a donation of £11,000 in 2011. In 2013 he guided the Province through the Royal Arch bicentenary, raising funds towards the Royal College of Surgeons appeal, the Provincial target was £10,000. E Comp Blanchard was able to forward £20,500 to Supreme Grand Chapter, a figure placing Wiltshire amongst the top five Provinces in the country per head of membership.

Under his leadership he gained the respect of all Companions throughout the South West and beyond, leaving the Province in a healthy state with the Companions enjoying their Royal Arch Masonry.



John Christopher Reid

2015 –



E Comp John Christopher Reid was installed as Grand Superintendent on 16th May 2015 by **M E Comp George Pipon Francis, Second Grand Principal**. E Comp Reid had served the Province well and had been appointed by the First Grand Principal as a member of the Committee of General Purpose of Supreme Grand Chapter in January 2018; he is also a member of the United Grand Lodge Audit Committee.

Following in the footsteps of his predecessors E Comp Reid continued the high level of visiting, regularly traversing the Province with tremendous support from his dedicated Executive and very committed Provincial Teams. The offer of Provincial assistance to every Chapter had always been a high priority for him in providing support and encouragement to all of his Chapters.

Under his leadership the Province has embarked on a number of initiatives which included the following;

- *Promoting the sharing of the ceremonies to involve more Companions.*
- *A number of Banner Dedications.*
- *Enhancing the Royal Arch within Craft Lodges with a special Royal Arch Representatives Pack.*
- *A growth in overall membership.*
- *Establishing the Children at Christmas Initiative to support vulnerable children.*
- *A successful Royal Arch Twitter page and Royal Arch Newsletter.*
- *The establishment of the 'Travelling Quaich' to foster visiting and Companionship across the Province.*

In addition, he had ensured the Province had continued to build fraternal relations with the Provinces of Buckinghamshire and Gloucestershire and Herefordshire. The Province was also active in the quadripartite meetings with the Provinces of Dorset, Hampshire and Isle of Wight & Somerset.

In challenging and unprecedented circumstances E Comp Reid had overseen the Province through the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020 and in order to keep the Royal Arch in the minds of Freemasons within the Province, had taken to hosting virtual presentations to Craft Lodges promoting the Companionship of the Order.

Conclusion

Such is my very brief but totally inadequate history of this great Province of ours. Yes, with 17 Chapters it is a small Province by any standards. But Companions small is not only beautiful but also potent. If there is any doubt amongst you of this statement reflect on E Comp Sidney Charles Cockayne. Small in stature but a veritable Alexander the Great amongst Freemasons who considered that his greatest achievement was to superintend *'this precious Royal Arch jewel set upon a Masonic blue sea'* :-

this Royal Arch Province of Wiltshire.



The 'Travelling Quaich' established by the Most Excellent Grand Superintendent, E Comp John Reid to foster visiting and Companionship across the Province.



