



## Rose Croix | District of Buckinghamshire

### INSPECTOR GENERAL'S FORUM – 1<sup>ST</sup> NOVEMBER 2023



Good evening Princes and welcome to the Inspector General's forum element of this Buckinghamshire Higher Degrees Chapter meeting. I shall be open to questions once I have delivered my take on the past year and my hopes for the next year.

Since this meeting last year, I have attended 39 Rose Croix meetings, 11 of which were Enthronements, another 11 were working meetings within our District, 11 were Higher Degrees meetings at Duke St and the other 6 were as a visitor to other Districts. I have therefore seen a lot of ceremonies and indeed, had a part to play in several and it has been a thoroughly enjoyable experience. The only dark spot for me was having to miss the Enthronement meeting of this chapter in March - I finally got caught by an entirely asymptomatic positive COVID test which took 6 days to clear. I hope to enjoy a similar timetable over the next year although doing without the Covid positive would be preferable.

The over-arching essence of the last 12 months has been one of continued progress in getting back to where we were before the pandemic struck. Despite a reduction in total memberships of some 4% in the District, total attendances are up by 42% over the previous year. This charge has been led by St Nicholas at Kimble, Seventh Circle and Sunnymeads chapters and while statistics can prove anything (and the biggest increases have perhaps come from a low base level), I was pleased that we received 15 new princes into the Order and had 13 joining members during the last year. This gain of 28 was unfortunately negated by a loss of 40, which came partly through deaths, elections to Honorary membership, cessations or exclusions, but primarily through suffering 26 resignations. I rather think that high number is a hangover from the hiatus caused by Covid and the fact we are all getting older, less well and moving away. I hope all Almoners and Recorders have contacted all those who resigned to establish the reason for each and every resignation and to make sure there is nothing the chapter or the District could do to help those who leave. That is the statistics out of the way.

As always, there have been a few trends emerging in our work this year which I would like to bring to your attention. I don't like to see books being used in open chapter. I don't mind if members not in office or newer members visiting want to sit in the back rows following the ceremony quietly with their books in their laps but on no account are they allowed to prompt. Moreover, officers delivering ceremonies should deliver their ritual and floorwork from memory, no books or extensive notes being used. This means that attendance at chapters of rehearsal is important, especially for Marshals and Raphaels, so that each officer taking part in ceremonies for new members is practised and competent to deliver an enjoyable experience for our candidates. Everyone needs a small prompt from the DC or Immediate Past Sovereign occasionally but line by line dictation or reading the ritual is not acceptable.

There continue to be discussions about who can Propose and Second accounts – which should be done just before a new Sovereign is enthroned. The auditors or account examiners are the only people who

know enough to be able to assure the members of the regularity of the accounts, so I think they are the obvious proposers and seconders.

Alms are collected in our chapters whilst standing and are best achieved by Marshal and Raphael walking together to the East, one accepting the Sovereign's donation and then moving clockwise to the Prelate and continuing round that way while the other, after the first collector has left the Sovereign, should proceed anti-clockwise until they both meet somewhere around the room. They then proceed together to the Almoner standing in the East (if he is present) and he in turn hands the donations to the Prelate who gives the short prayer and then returns the bags/dishes etc to Marshal or Raphael who carries it all to the Treasurer.

Some Sovereigns and Generals still seem to be risking damage to the furniture on the (very) few occasions when knocks are required. A polite quiet knock (and with the baton if desired, is all that should be required in our normally peaceful chapter environment.

I have also seen mistakes creeping into the Third Point Procedure. DCs should be keeping an eye on newer members so that any individual who crosses his arms when forming the living circle, or taking a sip of wine as soon as he receives the goblet instead of turning round first, speaking the password and then sipping, should be taken aside afterwards and re-briefed on the correct procedure. Reminders before processing back in for the Third Point shouldn't be too extensive but there are several things about which the DC could reasonably remind his flock. One of those should also be that members should not feel awkward about only participating virtually as the wine circulates; Covid is less of a threat than it was but anyone with a cough or snuffle should simply raise the goblet slightly towards his lips and not take a sip if he might risk passing infection to the next man in line. The rest of us would appreciate his consideration.

I would encourage all Almoners and Recorders to keep telephoning members who don't attend meetings of your chapters. There are still a few members who have not yet resumed meetings, but some might be persuaded back by a friendly phone call just asking how they are. I am very encouraged to hear Almoners making extensive reports to their chapters on other members' illnesses where the individual's permission has been obtained. Those of us hearing those reports will then know who might appreciate a quick phone call just to touch base.

We must continue to recruit our friends into our chapters. The Rose Croix used to be regarded as an invitation-only Order but that all changed at least 40 years ago. When in conversation with friends we can point to a beautiful ceremony, the complete lack of salutes and deputations in the chapter proceedings and a clear and simple District and National structure. We don't have pop-up posters, lapel pins or internet marketing but a simple chat with an invitation once a suitable brother has been a Master Mason for a year could well prove beneficial, to him as well as to us. It is worthy of note that although Craft and Royal Arch have suffered much worse losses than us in recent years, we are told that their numbers are now increasing again. They are our target market, so I encourage you all to get out there and recruit.

I am very pleased that all Recorders are now sending their summonses to the other Recorders in the District and that those meeting details are being cascaded down to everyone in the Order in Bucks. I would encourage all our members to visit other chapters whenever they get the time. A couple of our chapters need extra people to bulk up their numbers and I hope the members of those smaller chapters also make their way out to visiting – they already know how pleasant it is to have visitors joining their meetings so they should realise how much their travelling to other meetings can mean.

Right, that is the moans out of the way as well.

Today is the 7<sup>th</sup> anniversary of my appointment as your Inspector General so if I don't get found out I shall have 3 more very satisfying years in office. I have been helped a great deal during that time by very many people. Firstly, there was Peter Carter who looked after David Sawyer for 7 years and then

me for 2 more years as the District Recorder. Then came Peter Moody and he has been and remains a terrific asset as supporter, secretary and guide not only to me but also to our Recorders in Buckinghamshire and, on occasion, to Supreme Council staff as well. He is coming up to Duke Street in 12 days time to receive his 32° and will then wear his well-deserved new collar as he travels round the District being his usual permanently-helpful, wise and very friendly self.

There have been several promotions in the last year. Stephen Knight, my successor as DC in Cygnet Chapter as well as being part of a very busy Royal Arch executive, and Mike Clanfield, past Recorder and future Sovereign of this chapter and also busy in Royal Arch, both got their 31<sup>st</sup> degree in Dec 22.

Matt Arnold, DC of this chapter and of Robert de Turnham who is only rarely disobeyed, and Harry Hunter, DC of Via Phari and energetic preceptor with Bill Thomas at the monthly Beaconsfield Chapter of Improvement, both got their 31<sup>st</sup> in February 23.

Peter Stinson of Via Phari got his 30° in Feb 23.

Gary Brodie and Gordon Robertson of Sunnymeads, and John Marriott of Robert de Turnham all got 30° in April 23.

Mike Power of Hope Chapter got his 30° in September 23.

James Blackhurst, our current Recorder, webmeister and generally busy in many degrees, and Rob Chaproniere, past Recorder and current Treasurer of Seventh Circle at North Crawley whose busy exploits in Metropolitan Royal Arch are not to be sniffed at, are both getting 31° on 8<sup>th</sup> January next year and Mel Shah is getting his 30° on that day too.

Finally, Peter Corbett of Robert de Turnham a Past Recorder and long-serving Sovereign here, formerly of Newport Pagnell and now ensconced down in the South, and Bill Thomas of Merlaue chapter, serial founder of others and co-conspirator with Harry Hunter at the Beaconsfield Rose Croix rehearsals are both getting their 32° on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2024.

I also thank all the chapter recorders who undertake the administration of our favourite degree and although I don't have a list of them, I thank every proposer and seconder of our candidates during this last year and would encourage them not only to repeat their efforts this year but to badger other members of their chapters to copy their example.

Princes, that concludes what I want to say and I am ready to answer any questions here or in the bar afterwards.

Peter Harborne 33°  
Inspector General  
Buckinghamshire