



Rose Croix | District of Buckinghamshire



Princes all, time for the Inspector General's forum. I propose to speak for about 10 minutes and will then be open to questions either in here or over at the bar. An abstract of this talk will appear on the website in due course. And while on the subject of the web site, we must all thank James Blackhurst for his sterling work in designing and producing it as well as for his amazing speed in putting new information up. I would encourage all Recorders to include the web address somewhere on their summonses.

[<https://www.bucksrosecroix.org>]

I am required by Supreme Council to write a report each year on the state of the District and I was pleased this year that the small decreases of the 2 previous years were brought to a halt and that we actually increased our total memberships by one. There were 14 perfectees in our 10 working chapters and this is a very welcome trend. There are apparently around 2,900 Craft freemasons in the province of Buckinghamshire. I know that the number has been reducing over recent years, and also that a fair

proportion of those masons may not be of the Trinitarian Christian Faith, but we have but a mere 10% of the Craft total in our Bucks Chapters so there is no doubt that our recruiting pool is quite big. I'm not actually too concerned if a few from nearby Districts should wish to slide across and join us too. We don't necessarily look just for numbers of course; we want to make sure our candidates will enjoy their Rose Croix membership and that those of us already here will enjoy having them with us. Please do look around your lodges and Royal Arch chapters for suitable recruits and see if suitable men have the time and inclination to come and join what most of us regard as the best Order in Freemasonry. All that said, resignations still seem to be running at around 5% each year and I trust that Recorders, Almoners and DCs examine all their chapters' losses to ensure that a leaver is not in relievable distress.

I am also required to notify Supreme Council of my activities during the year. I have attended 37 Rose Croix meetings in the 12 months since this meeting last year of which 12 were in London and 7 were in other Districts leaving 18 I have attended within the District. I can't attend all 32 meetings of my 11 chapters of course, but if those chapters of which I am not a subscribing member particularly want me to be with them on a specific occasion, they should let Peter Moody know and we'll see what can be arranged.

Paul Sumedho, Barry Walton, Nigel Davies, Bryan Wilson, David Gregory, John Money and Paul Rush have all attended the Duke Street headquarters in the last 12 months to receive their 30° and Roger Wortley, Graham Perry and Peter Moody also made the journey and now wear their 31st Degree regalia. I congratulate all of them for their progress in the Order. We are limited in the numbers of 31s and 32s we can have on the books but all Sovereigns who have

completed satisfactorily the various elements of our ceremonies are eligible to be recommended for the 30° and it is important that accurate records are kept so that Peter and I can take the necessary action.

Many of us are experienced freemasons but not all are experienced in the Rose Croix. The floorwork of our ceremonies has many pitfalls for inexperienced or unrehearsed officers to fall into and I commend the monthly Chapters of Instruction at Winslow and Beaconsfield to everyone. Even Past Sovereigns and Prelates could benefit not just themselves but also the other attendees – the more the merrier makes for a more enjoyable practice night. The dates are listed on some of our Chapter summonses already and are the second Monday and second Tuesday of most months of the year – Peter Moody can point you in the right direction if required. There is also an excellent small booklet called “Specific Duties of Chapter Officers” and I would encourage every chapter to get some, write the chapter’s name on the front in indelible ink and pass them to successive officers on Enthronement nights.

There used to be a rule that talks could only be delivered at Rose Croix meetings by the Inspector General and there was an approved but fairly short list of talks that could be given. These days Supreme Council are a little more relaxed about who delivers a talk, but talks should ideally be about aspects of the Rose Croix ceremony, past luminaries in the Order or the history of the Order and any talk must have been approved in advance by the Inspector General. That said, talks about more general freemasonry may be given if chapters are so inclined but must be delivered only once the Chapter is closed.

Setting up the rooms for ceremonies can be tiring work, particularly in a couple of our centres, so please encourage younger, fitter (though not necessarily just newer) members to help the Outer Guard, DC and ADC to do the work. The same applies to breaking the chapter down after the meeting – the older and less fit should be the ones sitting down in the bar first while those of us more suited to lifting, carrying and packing should be helping to finish the process faster so that everyone gets a drink before going in to dine. I remember giving our DC in Cygnet chapter Ken Pausey a mouthful once when I came down the stairs at Slough having finally packed everything away to find everyone else was already half-way through their starter.

THE RULES – some reminders of specifics which have been stretched this last year. The rules are quite clear that accounts must be presented at the Enthronement meeting before a new Sovereign is enthroned. They are also adamant that any candidate for perfection must have been a Master Mason for 12 months. They are also quite clear that a prospective new Sovereign cannot be elected (or declared) unless he has served a full year as a General – that means he has to attend the Enthronement of his year as a General if he is to become qualified to sit in the big chair – I trust Recorders to keep an eye on this because those coming up to a General’s appointment may not realise the difficulty which their absence at the Enthronement meeting can cause.

There are 3 aspects of our ceremonies about which I feel motivated to comment. The first is that some Princes acting as Prelate do not wait between paragraphs as they read Isaiah Chapter 53 in the first point. It is important that the paragraphs coincide with the candidates’ perambulations so the Prelate must wait between paragraphs for some signal from the DC or other nominated individual before starting the next piece of prose. The next practice which seems to be creeping into the third point is a tendency for the piece of bread or biscuit to be raised as a sort of salute to the one with whom you are sharing the feast of fraternal affection. This is frowned on by Supreme Council as it could be interpreted as conferring some extra importance to the piece of biscuit and this is inappropriate. The same applies to covering the

dish of biscuits with the cloth on the goblet after the circulating of the bread, salt and wine is complete. Again, the bread or biscuit and the wine are not sacraments so if someone decides to take an extra bit as they walk back to their seats it is not sacrilegious even if it is a bit uncouth. The third point is that in these days of electric candles on the altar I like to see a night light lit beside the altar before the Third Point so that at the appropriate point in the ceremony the Prelate can carry a lighted taper from the altar to the tasse to set it alight. Setting light to the tasse with matches or a lighter doesn't seem quite right to me although lighting the taper with a match while back at the altar and carrying that forward is a reasonable second choice.

There are a few other tips and wrinkles which make the ceremonies proceed more smoothly, but I think this forum should be aimed more at strategy than tactics so I will not delve into the ritual more deeply. We do not have a District Director of Ceremonies who could pronounce on such matters so you will have to put up with the occasional emailed notes to DCs and Records from what could be referred to as your Pair of Peters. Peter Moody and I are of course your conduit to Supreme Council as well as from Supreme Council and we shall continue to serve you to the best of our ability in coming years.

Many of you will have presented Supreme Council certificates to newly-perfected princes and will therefore know the date when our Supreme Council was founded. Many of our Sovereigns will have a rosette on their sovereigns' collarette and some may even know the reason for its presence. These 2 facts remind us that next year is the one hundred and seventy-fifth anniversary of our Supreme Council being established. This can apparently be called a terquasquicentenary, a demisemiseptcentenary or a quartoseptcentenary, but don't be surprised if Supreme Council don't refer to it as any of these things. What is certain is that the 175th centenary is going to be celebrated next year but it will probably not be an excuse to extract money from you. All Districts have been invited to mount an event to mark this anniversary and to submit a bid for a Supreme Council member to be present at it. We shall let you know in good time how Buckinghamshire intends to celebrate this milestone, but my intent is that it will be a party of some description rather than a fund-raiser.

Finally there is a lovely piece of ritual in another order which states that "*those in the highest sphere of life have the largest province wherein to do good but those of an inferior degree will be as eminently distinguished if they move regularly and prove useful members of society. The highest is he who performs his part best not he who fills the most exalted position*". As a call to humility, I can think of no better maxim for us to observe and follow. Each of us should aim to serve everyone else and so may our Order, and our District, prosper for many years to come.

Peter Harborne 33°
Inspector General
Buckinghamshire