

The Royal Arch

CONTINUE THE JOURNEY

Discover more



SUPREME GRAND ROYAL ARCH CHAPTER
OF NEW ZEALAND

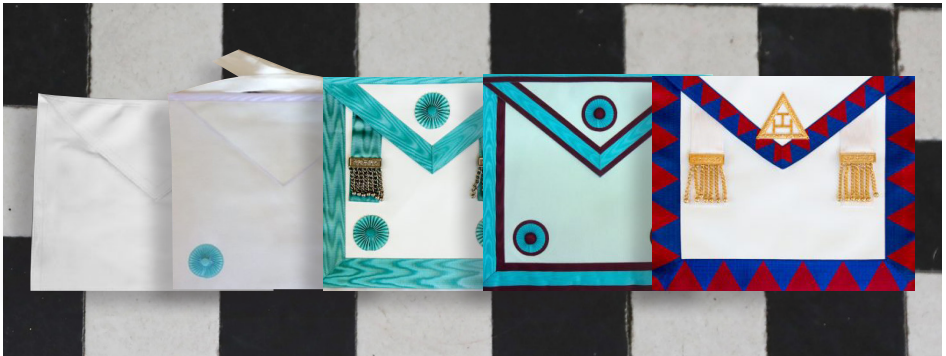
One Journey...



Discover more

Whether you have just been raised or have been a Master Mason for some time, you probably have questions, *such as what is next, how do I discover the secrets that were lost or, perhaps, what does it all mean?*

You might also be wondering how to enjoy more of what Freemasonry has to offer and how to expand your social circle beyond that of your own Craft lodge.



The Royal Arch provides answers to these questions and where you will discover more of what Freemasonry has to offer.

From Initiation to Exaltation

Every Master Mason should aspire to continue their journey from initiation in the craft, to exaltation as a Companion in the Royal Arch.

When the Antient and Modern Grand Lodges came together to form the United Grand Lodge of England in 1813 they declared that *Pure Antient Masonry consists of three Degrees: the Entered Apprentice, the Fellow Craft and the Master Mason including the Royal Arch*’.



ME Comp Dennis Waller, First Grand Principal

A similar declaration appears in the Book of Constitution of the Grand Lodge of New Zealand, expanded to define the Royal Arch in New Zealand. “Grand Lodge recognises only the degrees of Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft, Master Mason, Mark Master, Excellent Master, and the Royal Arch, as being pure Antient Freemasonry.” This represents an important part of our history and heritage. You will note that there are two additional degrees in the declaration. In England there is a separate body apart from Grand Lodge that administers the Mark Master degree, and they only run the Excellent Degree on special occasions.

In New Zealand all three are administered by the Supreme Grand Royal Arch Chapter of New Zealand and run regularly. In joining the Royal Arch, you will progress through all three degrees.

Continuing your Masonic journey

When you become an Entered Apprentice Freemason, you are placed in the north-east corner of the lodge to represent the foundation stone of a new building and are encouraged to raise a superstructure perfect in all its parts and honourable to the builder. You are, allegorically, the building, and urged to improve yourself with as much honour and pride as any builder would have with his work, so as to be, as near as possible, a perfect man.

Your Initiation is the beginning of a lifelong journey in which you discover more about who is that builder.

The degrees you pass through on this journey contain allegorical lessons that aim to help you live a better life in harmony with others and serve as an example that benefits society. But even though the world has changed a lot since the 18th century when these allegories were first conceived, the principles involved are just as important now as they were then.



The Degrees

By the time you became a Master Mason, you would have learnt a lot on your Masonic journey and made great progress. However, you also learn that the journey is not finished as the genuine secrets of a Master Mason remain lost. This implies that there is more to learn, and that is indeed true.

As already mentioned, in joining the Royal Arch, you will complete the three degrees of Mark Master, Excellent Master and the Royal Arch.

Mark Master

In operative Masonry the use of a distinguishing mark to identify each craftsman's work is a long-established practice and was widely employed in the erection of cathedrals, castles, churches and other stately buildings of the Middle Ages in Great Britain and Europe. This mark served two useful purposes. It established a craftsman's entitlement to wages and, in the event of faulty work, enabled the foreman or overseer to identify the workman responsible.

The ceremony of Advancement is centred on this practice and is particularly directed to the instilling of order, regularity, diligence, and discipline. The Mark degree instructs us how that learning can be most usefully and judiciously employed for our own honour and the benefit of our fellow man. And while our motives may sometimes be misinterpreted, our attainments underrated, and our reputations disparaged, it demonstrates the merits of persistence in the face of adversity and the conviction that truth is right and will prevail.

The Excellent Master and Royal Arch Degrees

The Excellent Master degree is a preparatory ceremony which involves qualifying a Brother to *“pass the veils”*. It is an impressive and beautiful ceremony to experience and witness.

The Royal Arch degree dates from at least 1752 and was for a long time an appendage to the third degree in craft masonry, being regarded by the *“Ancients”* as a fourth degree. It has become one of the most talked of, and written about, degrees in Freemasonry. For many it is regarded as the culmination of the craft system, having been described by prominent historical figures as *“the most sacred part of Masonry”* and *“the root, heart and marrow of Freemasonry”*. Others have described it as the perfection and completion of Freemasonry.

It covers a lengthy period following the ending of King Solomon’s reign. The Temple of Jerusalem was destroyed, the kingdom of Judea divided, and the tribes taken into captivity. Babylon eventually fell to Cyrus the Great who set free the Jewish captives and invited them to return to Jerusalem to commence rebuilding the Temple.

The legend acts out the restoration of the genuine secrets of a Master Mason and this is accomplished by workmen who make a momentous discovery during their labours and an illuminating explanation of the nature of God is conveyed.



The Chapter

Members meet in Chapters between four and six times a year. These tend to be more relaxed than Lodge meetings and suppers are convivial and enjoyable. Members learn the important lessons of companionship and collaboration, with everything done as part of a team. This emphasises the further friendship and companionship to be found within the order, and the important value of working together in harmony with others.



Pure Ancient Freemasonry

The journey through “*pure Ancient Freemasonry*” and the discoveries each person makes in the Royal Arch are very personal. But you will discover that, even today, these allegories still represent valuable lessons we can all learn from – and enjoy in the process.

When and how can I join the Royal Arch?

You may apply for membership of a Royal Arch chapter six months after being raised to the degree of a Master Mason. You do not have to wait until you have been Master of your lodge, as was considered the practice some years ago.

Find the most suitable chapter and join at a time that is right for you, as long as you remain a member in good standing of a Craft lodge.

Just like in the Craft, there are many different Royal Arch Chapters, each with their own history and traditions.

Just ask any member of your lodge, or friend, who is a Royal Arch Companion, or scan the QR code on the back page, or contact us at gse@royalarch.org.nz.



What else is there in Royal Arch Masonry?

Besides the three degrees outlined above, Royal Arch chapters will occasionally work the degrees of Royal Ark Mariner and the Red Cross of Babylon. There is nothing extra to join, or pay for, or extra meetings.

Royal Ark Mariner degree

Within a Royal Arch Chapter, a constituted Lodge of Royal Ark Mariners is formed. It is in two parts - the degrees of Royal Ark Mariner and Worshipful Commander Noah (chair degree). These focus on the legend of Noah and the Ark, and teach us to be reliant on the values which lie deeper than the literal interpretation of this biblical story.

Red Cross of Babylon degree



The degree is worked in a constituted Council, held within a Royal Arch Chapter. It focuses on the rebuilding of the second Temple. The incidents upon which the legend is founded occurred during the reigns of Cyrus and Darius (Kings of Persia) and the interruptions experienced by the Jews during the rebuilding of the second Temple. In the ceremony there is a very interesting feature of “*passing a bridge over a river*”.

And this is where your six degrees of Ancient and Accepted Freemasonry is complete.

Is there more?

While the Royal Arch degree is the culmination of pure Ancient Freemasonry, it is not necessarily the end of your Masonic journey. There's much more and a treasure trove of exciting and informative ceremonies to experience and enjoy.

Cryptic Council

The Cryptic degrees offer further explanation and insights of the stories of the preceding degrees. They give further insight into, and explain more deeply, the circumstances surrounding the construction and destruction of King Solomon's Temple.

Degree ceremonies are performed within a Cryptic Council. These are separate entities from a Royal Arch Chapter but are administered and subject to the constitution of the Supreme Grand Royal Arch Chapter of New Zealand.

There are four degrees worked: Select Master, Royal Master, Most Excellent Master, Super Excellent Master, as well as the chair degree of Thrice Illustrious Master.

Silver Trowel

The Silver Trowel degree is available for those who have been through the chair of a Cryptic Council.





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www.royalarch.org.nz

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