

Councils in the District

Carnarvon Council No.5, meeting at Havant on the 3rd Saturday in April; 1st Saturday after 4th Saturday in June; 2nd Saturday in September.

King Alfred Council No.71, meeting at Winchester on the 3rd Monday in March, May, and September; 3rd Tuesday in December.

Insula Vecta Council No.175, meeting at Ventnor on the 1st Friday in February, April, September and November.

Branksome Council No.209, meeting at Branksome on the 3rd Saturday in March and November; 4th Saturday in September.

Silchester Council No.226, meeting at Basingstoke on the 4th Friday in February; 3rd Thursday In April and September.

Harewood Forest Council No.246, meeting at Andover on the 3rd Monday in January; 3rd Friday in March; 2nd Friday in November.

Terra Regis Council No.263, meeting at Portland on the 5th Friday in any month except July, August and December.

Wessex Council No.283. (A Past Masters Council) meeting at Winchester on the 3rd Saturday in February and 1st Thursday in July.

Nigel Buckingham Council No.294, meeting at Gosport on the 2nd Saturday in January, March & October and 3rd Saturday in May,

For further details of the Order and of any Council, please contact Ron Bentley. 3. Craven Court, Fareham, Hants. PO15 6JS.

Email ronbentley@ntlworld.com

This leaflet written, produced and printed by Ron Bentley

The Order of the Royal and Select Masters Of England and Wales and Districts and Councils Overseas

Grand Master
M, III. Comp. John Alan Wright



The District of Dorset, Hampshire and Isle of
Wight

R. III. Comp. George John Deacon
District Grand Master

*An introduction to the Order of the
Royal and Select Master.
(Also known as the Cryptic Degrees)*

Qualifications for Joining the Order of Royal and Select Masters

A Master Mason who has been advanced in the Mark Degree and exalted in the Royal Arch Chapter

There are Four Degrees and are taken in the following Order.

Select Master (SM) – The story of the preparation for the building of the Temple commenced in the Mark Degree and in this degree the Three Grand Masters are concerned that the Ark and the Treasures could be lost forever if the Temple were to be ransacked. The scene is set in the Secret Vault beneath the Temple and relates the story of what happened to a well known mason, who had frequent contact with King Solomon, accidentally enters the Vault.

Royal Master (RM) – The Temple, being almost completed, the Overseers are anxious to receive the Master Word before the Temple is finally completed. One Overseer, Adoniram, seeks assurance from Hiram Abif of when he will receive the Word and be honoured as a Royal Master. The reply by Hiram Abif is probably one of the most moving and fascinating pieces of ritual a Mason will ever experience in any Masonic Order.

Most Excellent Master (MEM) – This Degree commemorates the completion and dedication of the Temple to the Most High and the honouring and celebration of those workman who had built the Secret Vault and is intimately associated with Mark Masonry. Hiram Abif has been slain and after a period of mourning the Holy Treasures are transferred to the completed Temple. *This Degree is akin to the "Passing of the Veils" worked as the Excellent Masters Degree in Scotland and can be taken in Bristol Freemasonry.*

Super-Excellent Master (SEM) – This Degree unites the M.E.M with the Holy Royal Arch. The story of this Degree is of the imminent destruction of the Temple, which had stood for well over 400 years, when Jerusalem had fallen to the Romans under Nebuchadnezzar and his army. The King, his family and the principal citizens were taken into captivity in Babylon. The puppet King, Zedekiah having fled, leaves the citizens to defend the Temple and they pledge their duty to do this in their devotion to God

The Regalia consist of a Breast Jewel which is awarded after taking the Select Masters Degree, and the Companion is invested with the Apron on completion of the fourth Degree, Super Excellent Master Degree.



Now that you may be interested in joining this excellent Order to increase your Masonic knowledge and experience, also to make new friends, you can obtain further details of the Order and the Councils in the District given on the last page by contacting Comp. Ron Bentley, whose contact details are on that page.

A history of the Order of the Cryptic Degrees

The word "Crypt" comes from a Greek word meaning "hide, conceal, or secrete" and thus has come to mean a vault, cave, or other place of underground concealment. The Cryptic degrees are centred on stories involving a vault or crypt where certain treasures were hidden beneath King Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem for very specific purposes. Rob Morris, a very influential Mason in the 1800s, first called them "Cryptic", a term coined by Bacon in the 1600s to mean "hidden" (as in "encrypted").

In 1870, a move to introduce the Cryptic Rite into England roused the interest of the fraternity including many influential masons who had encountered the Rite either in USA or in Scotland. In the discussions that followed, it emerged that in USA the essential preliminary to the Cryptic rite was the degree of MEM; but whereas the Cryptic degrees proper (RM, SM, SEM) were controlled by the State Grand Councils, that of MEM was under the State Grand R A Chapters. Hence in order to introduce the rite into England, it was necessary to apply to two sovereign bodies for dispensations. Those having been secured, four Councils were constituted; and it was then resolved to form these four councils into a Sovereign body: Grand Council was founded in 1873. There were four degrees in the original English Rite, the MEM being included as the 1st degree to bring things in line with the American Rite. The order in which the degrees were taken was: MEM, RM, SM, and SEM. In 1989, when revising the rubric for the new edition of the Ritual, it was decided also to revise the order in which the degrees are taken to make them follow the sequence of Old Testament history viz. SM, RM, MEM, SEM.

At its inception into Scotland, their Rite had also included the MEM degree but, in 1915, this was dropped in favour of the Excellent Master degree, which is not worked in English Cryptic Masonry. This, which at first raised a difficulty when inter-visiting took place, was solved in 1959 by an agreement between the two Constitutions that a Scottish Cryptic mason could witness the MEM degree after being "heled" i.e. taking a short obligation. Similarly an English Cryptic mason can witness an EM degree in analogous circumstances, but a Cryptic mason from one Constitution who wishes to join a Council in the other must take the appropriate "missing" degree. The first Book of Constitutions records that the early Councils originally met in Red Lion Square in London, later moving to what is now the Connaught Rooms, and various other temporary homes, before finally settling down in the present Mark Masons' Hall at 86 St. James Street, London SW1A 1PL. The Grand Council shares the services there of a salaried Secretariat with some seven other sovereign side degrees. The first Book of Constitutions (published in 1874) also prescribed regalia, but this was not enforced: Companions seem to have contented themselves with the Cryptic Jewel worn with Mark regalia. It was not until 1930 that the wearing of proper regalia was urged upon members. The Order made a very slow start but has gradually increased in strength and number of Councils. In 1889, the membership was 400 in 14 Councils; in 1914 only 17 councils were actively at work; but in 1967 its strength stood at 83 Councils and now there are over 300.

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