



Earlham Chapter No. 7266

The First Twenty Years.

By Gerald Chevin, PPGSN LGCR

See below for Reflections on this commentary by R Marks

My Wife Teresa, blames Ivan Kovler, and whilst she may be right I will always admire the way he encouraged me when we were chatting at the bar** this was during a break at a Lodge Meeting held at the Grosvenor Rooms in Walm Lane, for me to consider becoming a member of a new Masonic adventure of course I mean Chapter.

***Please do not think that we make all our decisions whilst slightly inebriated but those of the cognoscenti will remember a similar story regarding the formation of the Essex Millennium Lodge.*

Well that was way back in 1981, so I am surprised I can still remember the details after all these years but some things always stick in your mind especially the good ones.

Ivan was so good that he not only “got me” but he persuaded Ray Solomons too.

Well this was for both of us to become Exaltees of the Forest Ridge Chapter during 1982.

It was rather ironic as the Forest Ridge Lodge No 8306 was an offshoot of the Earlham Lodge No 7266, in fact their Lodge was the Earlham’s Daughter Lodge. So it’s all very incestuous.

The Scribe E of the Forest Ridge Chapter was then Neville Joseph he wrote to both of us confirming our date of Exaltation, which was to be held at the Kingsbury Hotel in Holborn.

On our arrival we were met by a host of their members curious to find out who and what we were, as there had up to that point been quite a lot of “bad blood” between the two Lodges. But I guess we appeared normal enough (*well I can’t speak for Ray of course*)!!

The ballot was in our favour we were prepared by the Janitor and duly Exalted into the mysteries of the Holy Royal Arch of Jerusalem. I found it an interesting and perplexing ceremony which was conducted with great aplomb, and decorum it made both of us wonder how could these guys learn this amount of ritual? I was truly in awe of such talented Masons “surely they must have read it how could they learn all that?” Was going through my head (*well I can’t speak for Ray of course*)!!

I met up with somebody at this meeting a man and a Freemason who would change my whole Masonic career path and influence my choices, and whole modus operandi with respect to Freemasonry that man was Ronald Isaac Marks.

But at this point I was totally unaware of his great and significant influence and how it would affect me over the next twenty five years or so.

I also took to Neville Joseph as his easy going manner, but obvious huge Masonic knowledge really impressed me, and I still believe even to this day I have never heard finer ritual in any of the many orders I now belong to.

The meeting was over, the Festive Board commenced and hanging over the whole meal was the fact that I was supposed to make a speech at the end in those early days I was very nervous about speaking in public (*my how things have changed*).

I managed my speech it seemed to go down well and after our goodbyes and promises to attend the Chapter of Improvement on the 3rd Monday of each month at Wanstead House we left slightly bemused, but full of praise for the way we were treated and welcomed into the fold.

To be perfectly honest I did not attend the C.O.I as I forgot, and I never ever thought that I a mere mortal would be able to cope with that amount of ritual which to my naïve eye seemed insurmountable.

Well in the fullness of time the next Chapter Meeting was about to be held my very first full meeting. It was Installation, so no candidate this time it would be all new stuff.

The M.E.Z. Elect a guy with a huge moustache named Mickey Mann stopped me before I entered the temple and asked me if I would like to be P.S. as he had heard that I was a good ritualist.

Somewhat taken aback I said I did not have a ritual book, and I did not even know what P.S. stood for let alone offer myself up for it.

Undaunted he gave me his book told me it was only to close the Chapter and answer a few questions at the Festive Board He insisted that I would not have any problems at all!!!!

Well that did not pan out exactly as specified, because as I did not know anything regarding the perambulations, and it clearly brought home to me that the only way to do the job correctly was to start attending C.O.I.

A lesson I still believe to be the right path..... all these years later.

My first trip to C.O.I. I was thrown in at the deep end and asked to go through the ceremony of Exaltation in full.

Well for those of you who know the work, are aware that it is probably the nicest ritualistic experience in Masonry to perform, but that night still without a book of my own I had no choice but to read it, which made me feel very stupid, and it was at that point, I vowed never to perform any ritual unless I had thoroughly learnt it beforehand.

The Preceptor Ronnie Marks was very encouraging towards me, and at my somewhat feeble attempt to read and try to pronounce the ritual and try and conduct the candidate at the

same time.

I was convinced I had really messed up and that they would “sack” me from this post, realising that I must be totally useless.

But to my great surprise that never happened and I was given lots of support, advice, encouragement and also a Domotic ritual book which I obviously needed more than anything else.

The following month at C.O.I. I was asked to rehearse again, and this time I had learnt all of it, much to the surprise and I think delight of the assembled Companions.

Well I was then ready to perform at the Chapter Meeting proper and apart from the usual nerves as in those days a turnout of forty or so members was quite common, even I felt good!!!!

Because in those days one was not allowed to progress in Chapter into the Principals Chairs until one had become a Master of a Lodge (*I was only J.D.*) I was kept in the P.S. role for SIX Years!!!!

As one may imagine this became somewhat frustrating for me, so I decided to look at other Degrees where one was able to progress through the chairs before taking the chair in the Craft.

That is why I joined Mark Masonry, Royal Ark Mariners and OSM.

Meanwhile back at the Royal Arch I also felt that I wanted to Propose some members of the Earlham Lodge into Chapter.

I got only one candidate in for Exaltation (Paul Sheffrin my Brother-in-Law) as the queue to join in back then was very long and the elders of the Forest Ridge Chapter naturally gave preference to their own Forest Ridge Lodge Members.

It was at that point the embryonic idea of an “Earlham” Chapter started to formulate in my gray matter. But being a naïve mason with virtually no understanding of the intricate mechanisms and machinations of Supreme Grand Chapter. Not really sure of what to do or where to go I enlisted the help of Neville Joseph a Supreme Grand Chapter Officer and the ex-Scribe E. of the Forest Ridge Chapter. His advice and help were invaluable I persuaded 17 other Companions to become Founders and we were sponsored by the Forest Ridge Chapter.

I really wanted to become the founding Principal Sojourner (*well after six years I was pretty good at it*)!!!

Eric Riegler a very well respected and Senior Mason became the Founding Scribe E. Ronnie Marks of course became the Founding D.C. and Preceptor, and naturally Neville Joseph the Founding M.E.Z.

Well on Thursday 24th November 1988 the Consecration Ceremony was conducted by The Hierarchy.

It took place at Great Queen Street, with SIXTY THREE Companions in attendance.

Future meetings were held at “The Gun” in Brushfield Street. London E.1. It is important to note that at this point that both The Earlham Lodge and its new Chapter were London based.

The Original Officers were:-

M.E.Z.	Neville Joseph
H	Reuben Goldman
J	Martin Hunter
Acting I.P.Z.	Sidney Morris
Scribe E.	Eric Riegler
Scribe N	Roy Valens
Treasurer	Sonny Cohen
D.C.	Ronald Marks
PS	Gerald Chevin
1 st Asst Soj	Ivan Kovler
2 nd Asst Soj	Jeffrey Posener
ADC & Organist	Barry Stevens
Asst Scribe E	Martin Grahame

Stewards :- Ray Solomons, Harvey Golding, Elliott Simmonds, Fred Gatland & Michael Miller

Below is the **ORATION** By E. Comp, the Reverend Peter Hemingway, PAGDC given at the Consecration of Earlham Chapter No.7266

“Companions! Today we are met for a very special purpose - a great occasion. I understand that on a number of previous occasions in the past, Earlham Lodge has discussed the possibility of forming a Chapter - discussions which have never born fruit - but today, 35 years since the birth of the Lodge its Chapter is born, and so the proud name of Earlham moves into the Royal Arch degree.

That proud name I understand comes from Earlham Hall, near where the original school of instruction met. Once a magnificent house as your Chapter badge shows. Sadly Earlham Hall is now in a dilapidated and sad shape - but today the name Earlham comes alive and is surly in good shape as this new Chapter is born.

The brotherhood and friendship which has matured in Earlham Lodge and other Lodges associated with it has grown - and the enthusiasm for masonry has encouraged you, the petitioners of this new Chapter, to move into a new sphere in this lovely Royal Arch degree - which we so truly say and believe to be the Supreme Degree.

Companions there are two features and moments in history that will make the Earlham Chapter special. The

first is perhaps a sad one - but nevertheless a feature to make you proud, for Earlham Lodge was consecrated by that great and inspiring mason Sir Alan Adair who died this year, -the year of the Consecration of the Chapter. The second of course is that this Chapter is born at a time when we contemplate significant changes in the ritual of this supreme degree and if and when they are adopted this Chapter will be in the forefront of those changes. Changes or not, Companions, we believe that the Royal Arch represents all that is best in masonry, and so it is right and proper that at the birth of this new Chapter we should today in this Consecration offer our very best to capture this moment in time, and make it a truly memorable occasion worthy of the high hopes of you Companion Founders. So, what is it that we are about to do today?

Described simply, we are bringing together a number of Companions from different chapters, and forming them into a new chapter - but of course companions, there is more to it than that!

During the ceremony you will hear the words "constitute", "consecrate" and "dedicate".

Constitute means to "set-up" - to "bring into being"- well, yes we are here to do that today.- but to "consecrate and dedicate" - has much more depth to it.

A dictionary definition of the word "consecrate" is "to set-apart for a sacred purpose".

So you, companion founders, are today being "set-apart" and "bond together" in an association which is sacred - which is "of G d".

We say that freemasonry is not a religion - yet, it surely is a wonderful "platform" on which men of differing faith can meet, in peace, love and harmony - as surely we do today.

Freemasonry allows us together to explore, through its mysteries, things which are spiritual - it leads us on a voyage of discovery towards G d -and today Companions, in this Consecration ceremony, we begin a new voyage of discovery, - a new chapter - and we mark this great occasion with the very best we can offer in solemn splendour of colour, of ritual, of prayer, of music and of pageantry.

This ceremony which is so full of mystery and symbolism "sets the scene" for this "setting apart" - this Consecration.

The prophet Isaiah wrote some words which I believe could have been written for today. He said: " Therefore thus said the Lord G d, Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone - a precious corner stone - a sure foundation".

And so may this precious stone, Earlham Chapter No.7266, which is laid today in the name of the Most High be a sure foundation - and in that foundation may you raise a superstructure perfect in its parts and honourable to the builder".

On 1st December 1988, The First Exaltees were Jeffrey Ziles, Stephen Forman, Michael Kenner and Len Sloan.

The first Joining Member was Jeffrey Bernard

The Earlham Chapter went from strength to strength coupled with its own trials and tribulations. Sadly the Following Members were taken from us to the Grand Chapter Above

Reuben Goldman a charming and genial man our 2nd M.E.Z.

Michael Miller a great friend and intelligent man who was taken from us at a very early age.

Elliott Simmonds another good friend a true gentleman of the "old school"

Eric Riegler (*see below*)

In 1992 my good friend and fellow protagonist Ivan Kovler became M.E.Z of both the Forest Ridge & Earlham Chapters simultaneously, and I followed the next year in both Chapters.

(At the same time I was also The IPM of the Earlham Lodge and Master of the BVoleyn Castle Lodge of Mark Master Masons and Worshipful Commander of the associated RAM Lodge)

It has always been this way with Ivan and I, he is much much older than me and consequently always gets there first!!.

I have been privileged to either propose or second over 80% of all the members of the Chapter since its inception.

When the Chapter was ten years old in 1998 I was presented with a magnificent engraved glass dish from all the Companions thanking me for all of my efforts so far. I was really taken aback and truly delighted and overwhelmed.

From my work in the Forest Ridge Chapter I was awarded London Grand Chapter Rank *(just after Ivan of course)!!*

Both Chapters were doing very well and there was always a list of potential applicants to be Exalted.

The Joint C.O.I was also very well attended, and I Proposed in both Chapters that the money to run the C.O.I. should be paid jointly by the Chapters so as not to penalise the members who attend.

When just over a year later in 1999 Eric decided that his Sojourn as Scribe E had run its natural course he wanted me to succeed him which was a very nice and thoughtful gesture which truly was his forte.

Eric was a very difficult act to follow, but with his guidance and advice at every turn I would like to think that I was able to emulate him.

Unfortunately Eric Passed to the Grand Chapter above on 3rd April 2007 at the young age of 92. Eric had been at one time the Secretary of Nine Lodges beating me hands down!!

He was the guiding light of the Chapter.

Age was not his friend and one time he came to see me at my Office in Woodford Green all the way from Chiswick he was convinced that they had "moved" the North Circular Road.

I was honoured to deliver a eulogy to such a great man and a Mason.

One of my first acts in "taking over" was *(after discussing it with all of the members)* to remove the Chapter to the Province of Essex and meet at Chingford.

Upon asking each member the general response was "why have we not done this before?"

In conjunction with Andrew Henderson based at Great Queen Street and The Provincial Grand Secretary Ken Harvey all was arranged and our first meeting was held at Chingford

on Thursday 7th December 2000.

I then with the Province on 30th May 2001 organised a Re-Dedication Ceremony which was overseen by the then Grand Superintendent Sir Neil Thorne. We had Sixty Four in attendance that evening and what a fine Ceremony and Festive Board it turned out to be.

The next memorable meeting (*well for me at least*) was when my Son Elliott was Exalted I was not sure which role to take during the Ceremony I asked Ronnie Marks to act as M.E.Z. and I assumed the role of P.S. (*naturally*) It was a very emotive time for me as I had been given the opportunity in the Craft to Initiate, Pass & Raise Elliott. I believe he enjoyed the whole experience as much as I did.

During 2006 I was elected to be the Preceptor for the Joint C.O.I. but following my Mentor Ronnie Marks is proving to be a difficult ,but highly rewarding task.

The Members of the C.O.I. are enthusiastic and dedicated to the perception of ritualistic excellence which certainly bodes very well for the future of both Chapters

It's very hard to believe but it will be our Twentieth Year in 2008, and we have planned a celebratory dinner at a local Italian Restaurant along with our Partners to commemorate this special event.

We have been given the great honour by the Province of Essex to host the Joint Chapter Meeting on 27th October 2008.

This will be one of my last tasks as Scribe E as in at the December 2008 I stated that I would be "stepping down" to allow another Companion to take over this very rewarding satisfying but onerous task.

So in conclusion, I would really like to thank Ivan Kovler for his initial introduction to the hidden mysteries of the Holy Royal Arch of Jerusalem, and to you Companions for helping me as Scribe E.

I would hope that you will all extend your help, advice dedication and co-operation to my successor Lewis Jacobs as you have to me, ensuring our wonderful Chapter may carry on going from "Strength to Strength.

Gerald Chevin, December 2009

Reflections - Ronnie Marks

Reading Gerald Chevin's article, on how he was Exalted into Royal Arch Masonry, and his progress in the Forest Ridge Chapter, and then on to the formation of the Earlham Chapter, brought back memories of thirty. Plus years ago.

I have already written about my early days in Earlham LOI. When I became a Master Mason, I approached Sid Israel, the Preceptor, about joining Chapter (the popular name for Royal Arch Masonry) I was given a dressing down and told to forget joining until I had been through the Chair and mastered all my Craft ritual.

At a meeting of the Forest Ridge Lodge, I approached Cecil Wershof, one of the Founders of Forest Ridge Chapter, about joining and Alec. Nathan said he would second me. To my surprise I was Exalted at the next meeting held at the Abercorn Rooms Liverpool Street.

Without raking over history, like Gerald, I took to the Ritual like a duck takes to water, and eventually became the Preceptor of the COI.

It was at one of our COI meetings that Gerald mooted the idea of an Earlham Chapter, Neville Joseph who was at the meeting, asked the Companions who were present and interested in being Founders, what office they would like to occupy. I was then D.C. of the Forest Ridge Chapter, and said I would like to be founding D.C..

Eric Riegler, the 1st Scribe E, contacted us and we were informed our petition had been accepted and the Earlham Chapter was to be Consecrated at Freemason's Hall on the 24th of November 1988, what an afternoon and evening it turned out to be:

We were honoured by the ME 3rd Grand Principal, the Rev.Preb. Leighton Thomson taking the "Z" Chair, assisted by Ex.Comp. Peter Hemingway, who was to succeed him as 3rd G.Principal. Ex.Comp. David Mauleverer was the D.C., he really made the ceremony a success, and ably assisted by Graham Redman, Brian Gould and Norman Nuttall (Officers of Supreme Grand Chapter) what a splendid occasion it was, followed by dinner in the Connaught Rooms.

We have been visited by some of our consecrating Officers who are now Honorary members:-

Ex Comp, The Rev.Preb. Leighton Thomson P 3rd G.Principal

Ex. Comp. Graham Redman AGSE

Ex.Comp. Brian Gould AGSE

Our meetings were held at the Gun, Brushfield St. E.1. until 2000, when the Chapter was reConsecrated at Chingford, by the M.Ex.Grand Superintendent Sir Neil Thorne, this also was a great occasion in the annals of the Chapter, as we were welcomed into the Province of Essex.

Since our entry into Essex, we have become one of the largest Chapters, we are greatly respected and have been honoured by the Province with many Active and Past ranks.

Our Ritual is envied, that is because we have a successful COI, which meets at Wanstead House 3rd Monday in every month, except August and December.

The success of the Chapter is due mostly to two Companions, our Scribe E's, firstly Eric Riegler, founding Scribe E, who has gone to the Grand Chapter above, and of course our current Scribe, Gerald Chevin,, an excellent administrator, keen ritualist, who has taken over as Preceptor of the combined COI.

We are fortunate to have a strong, vibrant, friendly and thriving Chapter and long may it continue to do so.