



The Northants & Hunts Demonstration Group
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We were set up in April 2008 with a brief to research material that could be presented in dramatic form to inform, inspire and entertain Brethren regarding the history, origins and meaning of Craft Freemasonry and the Royal Arch. APMG W.Bro Dr Vivian Thomas is our President and also Chairman of the Education & Training steering group that oversees all activities.

Through our own original research, and by collaborating with other demo teams around the country, we have taken on board 'best practice' whilst creating our own unique style and approach to producing and staging historic Masonic plays. Our plays are strongly recommended by the Province as an educational and entertaining alternative to Craft degree and Royal Arch exaltation ceremonies. Our repertoire currently consists of:



Lodge Night 1759, is a demonstration of a Lodge meeting before the 1813 Union which shows how a typical meeting was conducted, including an initiation of a "Mr James Thew, a Cordwainer from Northampton". The drama lasts for about an hour and is enacted by candle light by players in 18th Century costume. In the eighteenth century it was common for Lodges to meet in Inns and Taverns, and very often the Lodge was named after the name of the Inn or Tavern. The demonstration is of a meeting of the George and Dragon Lodge. The George and Dragon Lodge was the first

Northamptonshire Lodge, consecrated in 1730 as No.62. Sadly, it no longer exists, but we have stolen its name for our purposes. The action takes place in an upstairs room of The George and Dragon Inn in November 1759. A Narrator keeps the audience informed of what is happening and the historic/Masonic context. The ceremony is a composite picture of the ritual which was practiced around the middle of the century, and although there were many differences in the ritual practiced by Lodges of the period, this presentation concentrates upon the Ancients' working, much of which has found its way into the ritual practiced today. By the end of 2010 this play will have been presented nearly 20 times to audiences in and out of the Province.



How and Why the Royal Arch? The concept of this demonstration is to give an idea of what the Royal Arch is about, and how it came into being within the English Constitution in the mid 18th Century. There is very little information in the historic records of Masonry on this subject, and so this is based on the knowledge of who was around at the time, and some assumptions as to what took place. We are taken on a voyage of discovery by a bystander, a potman and not himself a Mason, as he observes the comings and goings of people attending different Masonic meetings in his Inn.

Through him we discover things are changing – and some factions don't like the changes. We also follow the frustrations of a recently made 'Worshipful' who believes his Masonic journey is not yet complete; *"are you telling me you are happy to accept the substituted secrets and you're not interested in finding the genuine ones"* he protests. But finds himself being thwarted and placated in this by a fellow Past Master; *"This obsession of yours is going to get us into trouble. Why don't you accept what we have accepted for years? What difference can these secrets make?"* Enter the hero, Lawrence Dermott from Ireland. Now he is not fictitious, he really existed. And the authors bring him and his beliefs to life for us as he explains to our hapless Worshipful the beauties of the fourth degree being practiced by the more traditional Masons in Ireland and London. Meanwhile, through the interactions of the potman, we continue to see the opposing views of the modernisers. This is a single play that meets the needs of both Chapters and Lodges. It brings the subject to life in a way that will make a Master Mason think more about the past and want to join the Royal Arch for the 'right' reasons; it also gives Companions at all levels of experience, an opportunity to reflect on the object and origins of the order. It has humour, drama and it is thought provoking. We hope, it will stimulate the search for more knowledge and 'constructive frustration' that there is always more to know, and more to discover. A spin off from this play is a couple talks the authors give – one to Chapters and one to Craft – entitled 'HOW and WHY the Royal Arch: The Journey'. The talk is usually given immediately after the play.



The Working Tools – a New Perspective. Mike Farrow and Barry Hales are members of Risdene Lodge No 6532 in Rushden. In this demonstration they enlighten us on how the tools of an operative mason were used in medieval times, and link this to their symbolic meaning for speculative masons. They take us on a journey to explore how and why we 'moralise' on the working tools of the three craft degrees. In so doing, they add new insights into the set of tools associated with each degree and their meanings; taking us further than the explanations included in our modern

ritual. Mike is a real-life operative mason. He shows the tools of the three craft degrees and explains their practical use. This is a working session where Mike uses a piece of stone and real tools. Barry picks up the story for each degree and for each tool with an historic perspective. He explains the tool's speculative importance and the significance of the order in which the tools are revealed to a

modern Mason. In 45 minutes Mike and Barry bring to life the working tools we speculate upon in modern Masonry. They convey to us the benefit of their extensive research and personal insights in a light hearted, informative and engaging way which will entertain and educate craft masons new and old.

And to be released in 2011/12:

- **Union of the Antients and Moderns.** Similar in concept to the Royal Arch play this production traces the issues that caused the 'Antients' to form their own 'Antient Grand Lodge of England' in 1751 in opposition to the then 'Grand Lodge of England' and their proposed changes to the Landmarks - the GLE became known as the 'Moderns'. Through correspondence and drama it traces the events that lead up to the 'Union' of the two Lodges in 1813 as the 'United Grand Lodge of England' (UGLE) we know today. We see the impact of the Union nationally, in the Province and on one Lodge - our friends from the George & Dragon Lodge, but now 60 years on.
- **Formation of the RMBI.** This play is set in the early 19th Century and follows the correspondence between the then Grand Master the Duke of Sussex and Dr Robert Crucifix. The concept is of the two groups representing the opposing factions. We hear how they deal with each other through their correspondence. We see how each camp considers their next move as the plot unfolds. This play has been added to our portfolio to support the 2013 RMBI Festival and can be presented to non-Masonic audiences - for example, a White Table.

A Message to Lodges and Chapters in the Province of Northants & Hunts. We have been set up by the Province for the benefit of Lodges and Chapters in the Province. There will be more plays released in future years. We charge a fee which is designed to cover our expenses and ensure we are self sustaining as a group. We recommend you collaborate with other Lodges or Chapters in your centre to stage these plays. We provide suitable publicity material and photographs to enable you to promote the event. And since this is a Provincial Demo Group, you should expect the Provincial team to support and promote your event. The 'actors' will pay a contribution towards the cost of their meal and would hope to have drinks and wine placed on the table provided by the host Lodge or Chapter for the Festive Board. We will sell programmes for the play and use the proceeds for our funds. We thoroughly recommend early booking to ensure you can include this unique educational and entertaining experience in your programme for the year. Contact us through the Provincial Office or by email below.

A Message to Lodges and Chapters in other Provinces. Since the articles about us in The Square and Freemasonry Today magazines we have received many enquiries from Lodges, Chapters and Provinces across the country. We are willing to travel and over half of our forward bookings are out of our own Province. The terms described above apply but we will also charge for travel expenses.

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More information email: demo-group-members@northants-huntsmasons.org.uk

Booking enquiries email: demo-group-booking@northants-huntsmasons.org.uk

Provincial Website: <http://www.northants-huntsmasons.org.uk/mas-ed-demo-group.php>

Discussion Group: <http://dailyadvancement.com/discussion/index.php?board=23.0>