



Supreme Grand Royal Arch Chapter of Queensland

TRAINING MODULE TM-RA-01

THE ROYAL ARCH – OPENING AND CLOSING THE CHAPTER

- References:**
- A. RA Degree Ritual published 2001.
 - B. DC Manual Rev Nov 2003.

AIM. To teach the ceremonial procedures involved in opening and closing a Holy Royal Arch Chapter.

- Notes:**
1. All Comp who take part in the various ceremonials should be in possession of the current Ritual. Numerous references are made within this Training Module to that Ritual in the form (pxxx).
 2. No Chapter can be legally opened unless a minimum of seven Royal Arch Masons are present, three of whom must be qualified to occupy the Principals' Chairs.

SETTING UP THE CHAPTER

Essential Items for every Meeting

A description of the layout of the Chapter furniture is contained in the Rubric (pp 99 to 106). A diagram showing the layout and relative positions of the various items of Chapter furniture is at (p 102) and is repeated in this TM.

- Charter, must be in full view of the Companions.
- Constitution and Laws, one copy only is required to be in place on the Presiding Officer's pedestal.
- Chapter By Laws, one copy only is required to be in place on the Presiding Officer's pedestal.
- Royal Arch banner, this must be present in the east in **ALL** workings including the appendant degrees.
- Altar, in its usual position, with emblems thereon including **the Triple Tau on the north east corner with the 'legs' to the west.**
- Veil and veil stand.
- Pedestals and cushions supporting the VSL, Square and Compasses and Sword and Trowel.
- Working tools, arranged in the usual form. The working parts are placed over the handles of the adjoining tools. The Shovel faces north east, the Pickaxe from south east to north west and the Crowbar in the west forming the base of a triangle. It is important that sufficient room is left to allow the SOJ and SW to operate.
- Collars of office, usually placed at the wearers stations.
- Robes, for the three Principals, SE and SN. The Scribes robes have a red collar and a gilt triangle which is worn to fall to the front of the left shoulder. All robes should be regularly cleaned and pressed.
- Sceptres, for the three Principals; batons, for the three SOJ and DC.
- Attendance register, placed outside the door of the Chapter Room with a pen (preferably red ink).

Essential Items for the Royal Arch Degree

All of the above items are required plus the following:

- The arch and columns. These should be regularly maintained.
- The four principal banners and twelve ensigns.
- The greater and lesser lights. Attention must be given to the state of candles/bulbs and the power supply.
- A white curtain at the entrance door, preferably on the outside, and drawn.
- The box with the keystone and arch stones.
- A kneeling cushion(s).
- A small lamp for the Altar.
- A small VSL for each candidate.
- A small torch for the PSOJ. For the reading of the scroll and illuminating the Principals' triangle.
- Life lines for the PSOJ.

- For the Cand:
 - A plain white robe.
 - A RA collar to which is attached a triple tau.
 - A rod.
 - An RA jewel.

CHECKING

Checking by the First Principal

The first duty of Z is to ensure that all present are entitled to be there, are properly clothed and have signed the Attendance Book. He can be greatly assisted here by the Chapter DC.

In most Chapters regular visitors are well known, but if considered necessary a visitor should be required to be either vouched for or tested. Testing procedure is included in TM-Gen-06. This vouching for visitors does not imply that all visitors must be seated in the Chapter before it is opened. The responsibility for vouching for anyone entering the Chapter after it has been opened, lies with the JAN.

Visiting Z may wish to be formally greeted and introduced.

Checking by the DC

Check that all essential items mentioned above are present and properly displayed.

See that all officers are correctly attired and are at their stations.

See that Comp are correctly attired and are seated in the north and south of the Chapter Room.

The three SOJ are seated in the south west, the PSOJ in the centre, the 3SOJ on his left and the 2SOJ on his right.

PROTOCOL

For further information on Protocol, see TM-Gen-04.

OPENING

Comp are seated in accordance with (p106). Principals open the Chapter (pp106 – 110).

Steps

The Principals must act simultaneously. Z should speak softly to H and J to synchronize their movements. Step,2,3, pause, S of F, bow & speak. Each step commences with the left foot. All three Principals hold the S of F each time while the words are spoken. They drop the sign together, pause and commence the next sequence. The actual starting point for the steps should be measured at the Practice Meeting. The last two steps by Z should be shorter than those taken by H and J so that on arrival at the VSL, Z is one pace behind them, thus forming the basis of the first triangle, with Z at the apex. This allows H and J clear access to the VSL and all three are in position to make the Promise.

Saluting the Volume

The VSL is picked up by H and J together, but only H opens it. It helps if the VSL is flagged with ribbon protruding from the right side of the page rather than near the spine. The left hands are placed under the VSL and the right hands are placed on top to form a triangle with the apex to the east.

Hint: If each Principal brings his right hand up to assume the S of F and takes it forward from there, it will be in the approximate position.

The feet are positioned next, the toe of the right foot against the heel of the foot on its right. This forms a triangle with the apex to the west.

Hint: The right foot is approximately at right angles to the right hand.

Saluting the VSL commences with Z followed by H and J. The VSL is replaced by H and J together. H steps back one pace in line with Z, J steps back two paces to be one step behind Z

Movement from the West towards the East

Z and H turn left and J turns right. They pause, all step off together, Z turns right at the north west corner and H follows behind. J turns left at south west corner. They pause. All step off together, J keeps in line with H. When Z is about two paces west of Altar, the Principals halt.

Note: The correct halting point will vary from Chapter to Chapter and can only be found by retracing the seven steps back from the appropriate finishing point east of the Altar.

DC calls Comp to order as Royal Arch Freemasons.

All except the Principals assume [35]. The Principals' steps follow the curve of a catenarian arch so that all three arrive about three paces east of the Altar forming the **first** triangle. Z facing west, H facing south and J facing east.

Note: The last steps of H and J are shorter and more to the south east and north east respectively so they can form the base of the Triangle. There is no easy way to perfect these movements. They must be practiced. Each step commences with the left foot. The Principals halt with feet together and turn the upper body only, towards the Altar. They give [35] and slightly bow the head after the third, fifth and seventh step. They hold the last sign in readiness for sharing the word. See Diagram 1.

DEMONSTRATION

Sharing the Words

Having retained the sign, each Principal places his right foot as for the opening. Right toe to the heel of the foot on the right. This forms the **second** triangle. With the right hand, each grasps the right forearm of the Principal on his left immediately below elbow. This forms the **third** triangle. With the left hand, each grasps the left wrist of the same Principal. This forms the **fourth** triangle. They then share the Words.

The order of movement is: feet first, then the right hand, then the left hand. Share the Words. Drop the hands and bring the feet together again.

Note: Remember that [35] is not resumed before breaking.

DEMONSTRATION

Unveiling the Altar

H and J face the west. They take whatever additional steps are necessary to reach the Altar, pick up veil together, place the veil on the veil stand and step back the required steps to stand in line with Z. All three salute the Words together [35] and all Comp drop the sign together. The Principals about turn to face the east. All except the Principals and SOJ assume the S of F and hold it until prayer (p109).

Hint: When the Principals turn, Z and J turn right about and H should turn left about.

Movement to Stations

Z takes two paces and H and J follow in the form of a triangle. Z pauses until H and J are in position, still facing east, they pick up their sceptres together, emblems to the north, salute their sceptres together, turn west together and assume the S of F. As Z starts to move, the SOJ also move to their Station and assume the S of F.

Hint: When the Principals turn, Z and H turn right about and J should turn left about. H and J turn slightly towards Z for the questions and responses.

All resume the S of F after the prayer. Z declares the Chapter duly and solemnly opened. The Principals knock with their sceptres, using their right hands and without bending over to do so. The S of F is dropped. The 3SOJ knocks on the door. The JAN replies. The Comps are seated by the DC, and sceptres and batons are laid aside.

Note: All knocks by the Principals are given with the sceptre. Once the sceptres are placed aside at the opening they are not picked up again until the Closing unless needed in the Degree. e.g to form the triangle in the R A Degree. The sceptres are never carried onto the floor while giving a Charge. The DC and the SOJ carry their batons at all times when moving around the Chapter except when otherwise stated in the Ritual.

DEMONSTRATION

CLOSING THE CHAPTER

There are two separate and distinct closing procedures:

The Closing (pp168 – 175), sometimes, and erroneously referred to as “the long closing”, which incorporates the Closing Address (pp174 – 175). This closing must be used whenever the Royal Arch Degree is conferred, including **BOTH** parts of the degree when split into two parts, and

The Alternate Short Closing, which does not incorporate the Closing Address, used at all other times, including the Installation Ceremony. It is not improper to present the Closing Address in the alternate short closing, particularly after an installation ceremony.

THE CLOSING

Sceptres and batons are carried.

Proving the Chapter

(pp 168 – 169). The salute (35) is given between Z and PSOJ and between PSOJ and 3SOJ. 3SOJ goes to, and opens the Chapter door without knocks, closes the door and reports. Comp then appear to order (35).

Sharing the Secrets

(p 169). Comp drop the sign. The Principals place their sceptres in the receptacles. The SOJ and DC place their batons on their chairs. All form triangles on the floor, the senior Comp as the apex in the east. If possible, the Principals should stand in front of their pedestals, on the dais. If insufficient room is available for this to be done, they should move onto the floor of the Chapter. It is not considered practical to share the secrets behind the pedestal. After the sharing, the Comps return to their seats but the Principals remain where they are.

DEMONSTRATION

Sharing the Promise

(pp 169 – 170). PSOJ proceeds to the VSL, halts, gives the S of F and all copy his example. He picks up the VSL, changes the opening to Isaiah 12.2 and reads. He then proceeds via the north to the east, turns the VSL to be read from the east and hands it to Z. He retires to the north east. Z, H and J proceed as at the opening, except Z is in the east, facing the west. The movements here are, left hand under, then the right hand on top and the right foot next.

Note: A different Promise is used in the closing.

Z hands the VSL to the PSOJ who proceeds via the south to the west. He turns the VSL to be read from the west, places it on its cushion, steps back one pace and assumes the S of F for a moment and all drop the Sign together. The Principals and the SOJ return to their station and pick up their sceptres and batons.

DEMONSTRATION

Prayer

(pp170 – 171).

Closing

(p171). Principals knock (3,2,2), keeping left hands in position. The body should not be bent over. SE drops sign, proceeds by the east and south to the west following a catenarian arch in the east, salutes the VSL with the S of F, closes the VSL without lifting it, assumes the sign (35), closes the Chapter, he and Comp drop the sign and SE returns to his station by the north.

3SOJ knocks on the door (3,2,2). JAN replies.

Forming the Triangle

(p 172). Z holds his sceptre horizontally with both hands at breast height with the emblem to the south so that when the triangle is complete he is looking through its centre. H and J hold the ends of their sceptres at the north and south ends of Z's sceptre respectively, with their emblems together to form the apex of the triangle. H with his right hand, and J with his left. H places his left hand half way up his sceptre to steady the triangle and J uses his right hand in a similar manner. The Comps assume the S of F. The Principals speak. All drop the S of F.

Breaking the Working Tools

(pp 172 – 173). The SOJ position themselves in the west and step up to the VSL. The number of steps to and from the VSL will depend on the size of the Chapter. If more than three steps are required, consideration should be given to making an about turn from the VSL before returning to their original position. The PSOJ steps back one pace, turns left, takes sufficient steps to the north so that he can turn south east and head along the north side of a Triangle to a position just west of the Working Tools. He passes between the Square and Compasses and the Tribal Ensign. The SOJ kneel on their right knees together and rearrange the emblems. The working ends of the Tools face towards the east. The order from the north is the Pickaxe, Crowbar, Shovel. The flat end of the Crowbar is regarded as the working end. They rise together. The PSOJ returns on the south side of the triangle, passing between the Sword & Trowel and the Tribal Ensign, turns right across the west and steps forward one pace to resume his station. All then step back the required number of paces.

DEMONSTRATION

Breaking the Sacred Words and Veiling the Altar

(p 173). The DC approaches the Altar from the south and stands at the south east corner. He gives the S of F, all copy his example. The DC breaks the Words and veils the Altar. He faces the east and says:

DC: (p178)

Comp repeat the word four times, at the same time striking the left breast with the right hand. Comp hold the fourth S of F and repeat

All.: and may God preserve Royal Arch Freemasonry.

All drop the S of F. The DC returns to his station by the south.

Closing Address

(pp 174 – 175). Principals and Comp move onto the floor and form a catenarian arch. If ladies and guests have been invited to the festive board, they may be invited and escorted into the Chapter Room to witness the closing address. Comp assume the S of F for the invocation. The sign is then dropped and Comp and guests disperse.

THE ALTERNATE SHORT CLOSING

Proving the Chapter

(pp175 – 176). Same as for the Closing.

Closing

(pp176 - 177). Same as for the Closing.

Forming the Triangle

(p177). Same as for the Closing.

Breaking the Working Tools

(pp177-178). Same as for the Closing.

Breaking the Sacred Words and Veiling the Altar

(p178). Same as for the Closing.

The Chapter is now closed and Comp disperse.

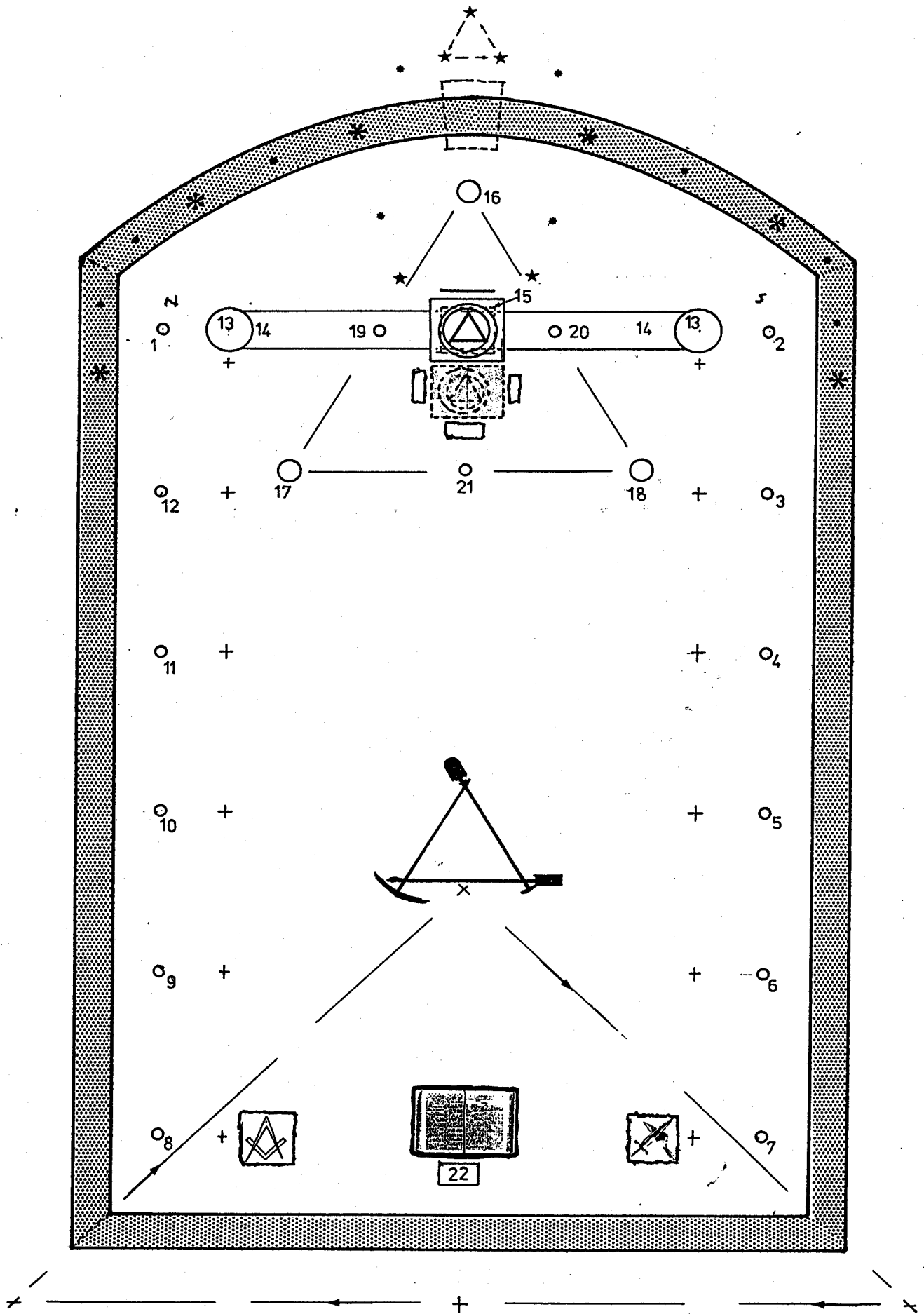


Diagram No. 1

KEY TO DIAGRAM No. 1

1	Tribal Ensign	Judah	Lion
2	Tribal Ensign	Issochar	Ass
3	Tribal Ensign	Zebulon	Ship
4	Tribal Ensign	Reuben	Man
5	Tribal Ensign	Simeon	Tower/Sword
6	Tribal Ensign	Gad	Troop of Horsemen
7	Tribal Ensign	Ephraim	Ox
8	Tribal Ensign	Manasseh	Vine
9	Tribal Ensign	Benjamin	Wolf
10	Tribal Ensign	Dan	Eagle
11	Tribal Ensign	Asher	Cup or Tree
12	Tribal Ensign	Napthali	Hind
13	Columns supporting the Arch		
14	The Arch		
15	The Keystone of the Arch		
16/17/18	The Greater Lights		
19/20/21	The Lesser Lights		
22	Kneeling Cushion		
xxx	Depicts the movement of the PSOJ and SW when attending to the Implements of Labour		
Large*	Depicts the positions of Z, H, J and the Scribes during their movement towards the east. The interspersed dots refer to their steps.		
Small*	Towards the west depicts the positions of the Scribes during their movement towards the Altar. The interspersed dots refer to their steps. Towards the east depicts the positions of Z,H and J during their movement to share the words. The interspersed dots refer to their steps.		