



Welcome from our Deputy Grand Master Mason

Dear Brethren

I am pleased to welcome you to the first edition of the Surrey Footer — a quarterly magazine to report on events in the South Eastern Counties Region of the Worshipful Society of Free Masons, Rough Masons, Wallers, Slaters, Paviours, Plaisterers and Bricklayers, and to publish articles and photos from your Assemblages.

I am extremely grateful to Bro. Chris Eley, who has recently joined our Order in the Nonsuch Palace Assemblage and has kindly agreed to take on the role of editor. Many of you will already have seen the excellent newsletters he produces for other Orders in Surrey and elsewhere.

We intend to issue this newsletter every three months, reporting on key events in our calendar. I trust you will find the Surrey Footer a useful platform to keep abreast of regional activity and a valuable tool in attracting new members to our Order.

Rt.W.Bro. Dr Miguel A J Godfrey, VII°
Deputy Grand Master Mason and Senior Passed Master



The website for the South Eastern Counties of the Worshipful Society of Free Masons, Rough Masons, Wallers, Slaters, Paviours, Plaisterers and Bricklayers, commonly known as "The Operatives"

<https://www.surreycompanionorders.com/welcome-society-of-operative-freemasons>





Nonsuch Palace Assemblage a Candidate's View



The Operatives (The Worshipful Society of Free Masons, Rough Masons, Wallers, Slaters, Paviours, Plaisterers and Bricklayers) was an Order I had been considering for some time, as it promised to fill gaps in my Masonic knowledge, particularly its links to King Athelstan. While at Sutton for another meeting I spoke to some brethren of the Nonsuch Palace Assemblage and enquired about their meeting dates. As these fitted my diary and the Masonic Hall in Sutton is close to me, I decided to join.



The next meeting of the Assemblage was on Thursday 18 June 2026. I attended and was balloted for as a candidate for Indenture. The ballot proved favourable and I was indentured as an Entered Apprentice in a most interesting ceremony by my good friend W.Bro. Mark Donovan, VI°, Deputy Master Mason.



This was especially meaningful as Mark is the Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master in the Masonic Order of Athelstan for the Province of Sussex, where I serve as Worshipful and Eminent Provincial Grand Prior.

Present at the meeting were the Deputy Grand Master Mason & Senior Passed Master, Rt.W.Bro. Dr. Miguel A. J. Godfrey VII°, and several officers of the South Eastern Counties Region, including another good friend, Rt.W.Bro. Mik Barnes VII°.

A number of members were unable to attend, so some officiated at short notice; everyone performed admirably and ensured I had a successful and most enjoyable evening. The afternoon concluded with drinks in the Miller Bar followed by a convivial festive board.



Nonsuch Palace



Nonsuch palace was a Tudor royal palace built by Henry VIII in Surrey in 1538. It was built to celebrate his thirty years as King, and the birth of his long-awaited son Edward. It was intended to be his grandest, most lavish palace, without equal (hence the name 'None such'), built to match the French king's Chateau de Chambord.

The palace was designed to be a celebration of the power and the grandeur of the Tudor dynasty. Unlike most of Henry's palaces, Nonsuch was not an adaptation of an old building; he chose to build a new palace in this location because it was near to one of his main hunting grounds.

However, the choice of location was unwise, as there was no nearby water supply. The palace cost at least £24,000 (over 22 million pounds in today's money) because of its rich ornamentation and is considered a key work in the introduction of elements of Renaissance design to England.

Sadly, the palace was incomplete when Henry VIII died in 1547. In 1556 Queen Mary I sold it and it passed hands multiple times through successive thrones, and civil wars, until Charles II gave it to his mistress, Barbara Countess of Castlemaine. She had it pulled down around 1682–3 and sold off the building materials to pay her gambling debts. Although the palace no longer exists, you can see the outline of its foundations from the air. Therefore, records of its design and decoration are all the more important as they are all that remain.

The Operatives – an overview



Operative or Guild Masons in England were organised with royal approval at least as early as the Grand Assemblage of 926 in York, reputedly authorised and encouraged by King Athelstan. By the early 1900s, the decline in guild masonry had left only a few operative lodges active. To preserve teachings and ceremonials, several operative lodges of the York Division resolved to take positive action.

Under the York Division's authority, the Channel Row Assemblage was reconstituted under its present title at Bedford House, London, on 21 May 1913. The Worshipful Society is governed by a Grand Assemblage in London and presided over by three Grand Master Masons.

Membership is restricted to regular Freemasons who are Master Masons, Mark Master Masons and Royal Arch Masons in good standing. Promotion beyond the V° requires prior installation as a Master in both a Craft Lodge and a Mark Lodge.

There are seven degrees in all:

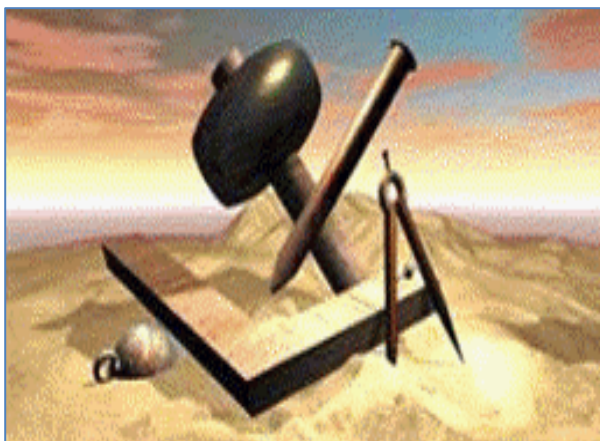
- I° Indentured Apprentice
- II° Fellow of the Craft
- III° Fitter and Marker
- IV° Setter Erector
- V° Intendent, Overseer, Super Intendent and Warden
- VI° Passed Master
- VII° Master Mason

The "VII° Master Mason" title refers exclusively to the three current Grand Master Masons. All others elevated to this level are "VII° honoris causa".

Each Assemblage comprises the Stone Yard and Lodge for the First to Third degrees and the Erection Site and Lodge for the Fourth degree. Every Assemblage is presided over by a Deputy Master Mason representing the three Grand Master Masons, who are ipso facto the Masters of every Lodge.

The Senior Passed Master (SPM/DGMM) is the personal representative of the Grand Master Masons in the Region and is assisted in the VI° Lodge by Regional Deputies J & B. In large geographic regions, Deputy Master Masons VI° (DMM VI°) may be appointed to assist both the DGMM (SPM) and the DMM V°.

The DMM V° is the Master of the V° Lodge and is a direct appointment of the Grand Master Masons; the DMM V° is not a deputy or assistant to the DGMM/SPM.



- Progression through degrees and promotion to office are merit-based, with prescribed minimum periods of service required for qualification.

The work of the Worshipful Society is similar in many respects to that of the Craft, Mark and Royal Arch degrees, but with notable differences. The origins of speculative degrees will become evident to candidates in the operative degrees; the old charges and explanations are retained in their original form, while much speculative work already covered elsewhere is not repeated.

The Society's purpose is to perpetuate ancient operative workings wherever they can be established beyond doubt. Membership can greatly enhance a speculative Freemason's understanding of ceremonial and ritual. The Society's work provides an important complement to the Craft, Mark and Royal Arch, and also relates to the Cryptic Rite and certain Allied Masonic Degrees.

Appointment and tenure:

- The appointment of all Deputy Master Masons and Senior Passed Masters is the prerogative of the three Grand Master Masons; each continues in office until a successor is appointed.
- Deputy Master Masons of Assemblages usually preside for one year. Deputy Master Masons V° are commonly appointed for three years, and Senior Passed Masters and Deputy Grand Master Masons for five years.

Membership and Progression:

- Qualified Freemasons may enquire of any member of the Worshipful Society if interested in joining. Many candidates are recommended by members and invited after favourable consideration by the Assemblage. All applications are subject to a ballot by members present in open Assemblage. Meetings are normally quarterly, with additional meetings convened when necessary.

The Revival of the Ancient Arch Degrees

Following the landmark September 2024 Grand Assemblage, the Society is poised to embark on one of its most significant historic developments: the reintroduction of the Arch Degrees.

A Historic Discovery

At the Grand Assemblage, the 1st Grand Master Mason presented research into the "long-lost" Arch Degrees of the Operatives. To preserve these traditions, the Society will honour seven Arch Degrees aligned with our existing seven "Square Degrees."

The Launch of the Arch VI°

The revived Arch VI° has been condensed from surviving documentation and will be launched at the September 2025 Grand Assemblage. Eligibility:

- Subscribing members of the Royal Arch;
- Holders of the VII°;
- Holders of the VI° who have served as DMM of an Assemblage (or by special dispensation).

Symbolism and Ceremony

The ceremony will take place in a specially arranged Arch Yard, overseen by a DGMM & SPM and led by a new officer title, the "Arch DMM". Rich in biblical symbolism, the Arch VI° features the Holy Book opened upon a 3x4 Square and Compasses arranged in the manner of a Craft III°, referencing Ezekiel 40:26: *"And there were seven steps to go up to it, and the arches thereof were before them"*.

New Regalia

To mark this new chapter, unique regalia has been commissioned:

- Arch DMM: A light blue collar featuring silver compasses open at 30°.
- Arch VI° Holders: Marked by a special breast jewel.
- Arch VII° Holders: Distinguished by a gilt bar on their ribbon.
- Grand Master Masons: Will wear collars with gilt compasses during Arch work.

This revival offers an inspiring opportunity for our senior members to deepen their Masonic journey and contribute to the restoration of these ancient operative traditions. We encourage all eligible members to prepare for this historic expansion of our Order.

The Worshipful Society of Operative Freemasons, South Eastern Counties.

BODIAM CASTLE ASSEMBLAGE

Lewes Masonic Centre, 148 High Street, Lewes, East Sussex, BN7 1XT.
2nd Thurs April & September, and 4th Thurs November.
Constituted 9th April 1977.

NONSUCH PALACE ASSEMBLAGE

Masonic Hall, Grove Road, Sutton, SM1 1BB.
1st Tuesday in October, 3rd Friday in March, and 3rd Thursday in June.
Constituted 26th June 1986.

MARKET CROSS ASSEMBLAGE

Masonic Hall, South Pallant, Chichester, PO19 1SY.
3rd Wednesday in January, July & October.
Constituted 17th July 2002.

GUILDFORD CASTLE ASSEMBLAGE

Guildford Masonic Centre, Weybourne House, Hitherbury Close, Guildford. GU2 4DR.
2nd Tuesday in July, 1st Tuesday in December, and 2nd Wednesday in February.
Constituted 26th March 2014.