

## **The Order of the Scarlet Cord.**

### **How did we get where we are today?**

Two years after the Inauguration of the Order of the Secret Monitor in 1887, a senior Secret Monitor, His Honour Judge Philbrick, came up with an idea which was intended to protect the welfare of the members and give the Order immense charitable status.

It is thought that the writers of the Secret Monitor ritual had, in the early days, incorporated in the second degree of the Order, several paragraphs relating the story of how Rahab, the harlot, had assisted Joshua's spies in their endeavours to estimate the military defences of the city of Jericho before the Israelite army proceeded to attack it. (The story was certainly included in the ritual in the early days of the last century.)

Judge Philbrick's idea was that an Order, based on this story, should be created where Secret Monitors would be admitted to its various grades in accordance with how much money they had contributed to the various departments of the OSM Benevolent Fund.

The various departments were as follows:

#### **(1). Education of Orphans**

On the donation of *one guinea* a brother would be entitled to wear a white badge and, if he was a Prince of the OSM, he would be entitled to seek membership to the Order. To progress would cost one guinea per step.

#### **(2). Sickness and Convalescence.**

On the donation of *ten guineas* a brother would be entitled to wear a red badge and, be entitled to seek membership to a higher grade in the Order. To progress would cost two guineas per step.

#### **(3). Help the Aged.**

On the donation of *twenty guineas* a brother would be entitled to wear a blue badge and, be entitled to seek membership above the third grade in the Order. To progress would cost five guineas per step.

Let's put these figures in perspective. In 1889 a coal miner earned an average wage of twenty shillings a week, so you can imagine this Order of Freemasonry was only enjoyed by the very wealthy. Hence the reason why most of the then Grand Officers were aristocrats and high members of society.

In 1929 the Order of the Scarlet Cord ceased to function and the reference to Rahab disappeared from the second degree ritual book. However the money collected continued to gain interest and offer relief to distressed Secret Monitors.

In 2004 I was appointed President of the Executive of the OSM and at one of the Executive Committee Meetings a Provincial Grand Supreme Ruler submitted a request for the OSM Benevolent Fund to make a donation to a local charity which the Province was supporting.

The Grand treasurer, on being asked if we could afford to support this charity to the tune of say £1,000, informed us that the OSM Benevolent Fund had just over £600,000 in the bank. He also informed us that, although we regularly supported petitions from distressed OSM members, mainly from Districts overseas, the interest on our capital always outweighed our outgoings. We of course supported the application.

The question was then asked if we could fund-match other Provinces and Districts donations to charity up to a maximum of £1,000 per annum.

The Grand Treasurer then expressed his concern that if every one of the then forty Provinces and Districts took up the idea, we would start eating into our capital.

So it was then suggested that it might be an idea to revive the Order responsible for our healthy bank balance. This was considered by the Executive Committee and, the then Grand Supreme Ruler and I, were charged to investigate the feasibility of such a project.

Many months were spent searching through papers in MMH and FMH until the GSR decided that we should proceed with the idea.

We found that some of the rituals were out of date and would not work in today's Masonic environment. They had to be edited.

Others had to be totally rewritten as they were only found in part, or not at all. However documented evidence gave us some clues as to the era and content of the original ritual.

By December 2006 we were able to consecrate Scarlet Cord Conclave No.500 and on the same day the founders received the First Grade.

An emergency meeting of No.500 was then held to introduce the Provincial Grand Supreme Rulers and the Order then became open to other Secret Monitors who were recommended by their PGSRs.

Although the original idea was to have just one conclave, based at Mark Masons' Hall, which would be responsible for bringing brethren into the Order of the Scarlet Cord, it was soon realised that this was not practicable.

The Order grew at such a rate that it was decided to allow Provinces to form a SC Conclave with a view to introducing brethren into the first three Grades of the Order at a local level.

At the OSM Executive meeting in April 2009 I was asked to put together a small steering committee to decide on how the Order should best progress as an Order appended to the OSM.

The original steering committee consisted of:

R.Wy.Bro. Brian Wareham.(Chairman)  
M.Wy Bro. Peter Glyn Williams (Grand Supreme Ruler)  
R.Wy.Bro. Andrew Sweeney. (Prov. G.S.R.)  
R.Wy.Bro. John Brackley. (Grand recorder)  
R.Wy.Bro. Roy Leavers. (Grand Director of Ceremonies)  
V.Wy.Bro. Angus Hannagan. (Grand Treasurer)  
V.Wy.Bro. Peter Rollin. (Grand Registrar)

The first couple of meetings were just brainstorming sessions when ideas were kicked around to decide our way forward. As we progressed some ideas were adopted and then on second thoughts dropped.

The main thing we had to decide upon was, should the OSC remain attached to the OSM like the Appendent Orders in the Red Cross of Constantine, or should it stand alone as does the Royal Ark Mariner from the Mark.

We began to investigate the feasibility of splitting the Order from the Order of the Secret Monitor and making it a separate Order in its own right. This was considered by all to be, by far, the best option.

The committee by this time had been named the “Way Forward Committee” and it realised that such a mammoth undertaking would need some help

V.Wy. Bro Ian Currans Past G.D.C. was co-opted onto the committee to assist with ritual, V.Wy. Bro. Simon Mighall as Minute Secretary and R.Wy.Bro.Brian Price to liaise with Prov. GSRs.

R.Wy.Bro. Michael Guest joined the committee following the announcement of his name being put forward as G.S.R. and R.Wy.Bro. Barry Clarke has recently joined as the co-ordinator responsible for the forthcoming Inauguration Ceremony.

For the past nine months the committee has met nearly every month and has worked tirelessly to ensure that the OSC will be ready to “fly alone” by this July. Many important decisions and recommendations had to be made.

These recommendations are as follows:

**1. The Order will be self supporting and the Grand Senatus will be inaugurated on 21<sup>st</sup> July this year.**

The Grand Temple at Great Queen Street has been booked for what will be a ‘once in a lifetime’ spectacle.

All members of the Scarlet Cord will be allowed to view the proceedings. Those Secret Monitors who are not members will be offered the option of being introduced into the First Grade of the Order on the morning of the Inauguration.

A sub- committee headed by R.Wy.Bro. Andrew Sweeney will arrange teams of officers to confer the Grade on those who submit an application.

A special Commemorative Jewel is to be struck which can be worn by all companions who are members of the Order prior to the Inauguration. This will, of course, include those brethren joining on the morning of Grand Senatus.

On the day of the Inauguration all Scarlet Cord conclaves will become consistories. The Supreme Rulers of these conclaves will become Presidents of the consistories. (I will enlarge on this later)

**2. The Order will be ruled by a Grand Summus who will have a Deputy, and Assistant and a full structure of Grand Officers.**

To maintain the connection with the OSM the committee recommended that the Grand Supreme Ruler should hold the office of Grand Summus for up to three years. There will inevitable be some duplication of officers but it is envisaged that within a few years this will remedy itself and each Order will have its own head, GDC., Grand Registrar etc.

**3. The Order will be divided into Provinces and Districts Overseas.**

In the first instance the Provinces and Districts will mirror current OSM Provinces and Districts. Two OSM Provinces could amalgamate to form one OSC Provinces but it is not advisable to do so as I will later explain.

**4. A Province or District with three or more consistories will be controlled by a Provincial or District Grand Summus.**

A Provincial or District Grand Summus will be entitled to a Deputy, an Assistant and a full officer structure. He will represent the Grand Summus within his Province or District and be able to appoint Provincial or District Grand Officers in accordance with the Constitutions and Regulations.

A Provincial or District Grand Summus will be designated as a **Right** Distinguished companion.

**5. A Province or District with one or two consistories will be controlled by a Grand Inspector.**

A Grand Inspector will be assisted by a Provincial or District Grand Recorder and a Provincial or District Grand Director of Ceremonies.

A Grand Inspector will be designated as a **Very** Distinguished companion.

As soon as an Inspectorate has three consistories the Grand Summus will then appoint and invest a Provincial or District Grand Summus who will be entitled to appoint a Deputy, Assistant and full officer structure.

**6. Any Secret Monitor Province or District with no Scarlet Cord conclave on the day of the Inauguration will be considered barren.**

Any secret monitor in a barren Province or District is free to join a consistory in another Province or District or indeed Scarlet Cord Consistory TI., which will be unattached.

It is hoped that such companions will then join together to form a consistory in that barren Province, this will then immediately entitle them to a Grand Inspector.

**7. Appointment of Provincial or District Grand Summi and Grand Inspectors.**

It is recommended that all Provincial Grand Supreme Rulers with a Scarlet Cord Conclave in their Province or District will be appointed to the office of Provincial or District Grand Summus or Grand Inspector. However, if it is apparent that another companion has taken the lead in the furtherance of the OSC in that Province or District the Grand Summus may opt to choose that companion.

Each Provincial Grand Summus will rank in order of when his Province first acquired three Scarlet Cord conclaves. After the Inauguration they will rank, as in other Orders, in order of appointment.

At the time of writing Nigel Adams (West Wales) will head the list of Provincial Grand Summi with Paul Botfield (South Wales & Monmouthshire) in second place. Both of these Provinces already have three Scarlet Cord conclaves.

I mentioned earlier that it is not advisable to amalgamate Provinces.

On 9<sup>th</sup> August last Paul Botfield telephoned me to say that he had been in discussions with Nigel Adams and they had agreed that they would prefer to amalgamate and have one large Province rather than a small Province and an Inspectorate . Paul was happy that he could have three SC conclaves but Nigel felt that he would struggle beyond one.

I advised him that the problem would arise when West Wales wanted to pull away from South Wales, it would not be possible until West Wales had three consistories in its own right.

Also when it came to the time when the first incumbent was to retire, because of the connection with the Secret Monitor, the new Prov. G. Summus would also likely be chosen from Members of the bigger Province.

It would be better if South Wales & Mon. became a Full Province and West Wales an Inspectorate. However I said I would phone Nigel.

I telephoned Nigel and he confirmed that he would be happy to work under Paul in an amalgamated Province.

Within a week I received a call from Nigel advising me that, on discussing the situation with his brethren in West Wales, they were to a man insistent that they could have three SC conclaves of their own and, although they appreciated the offer, did not want to amalgamate with South Wales. As I mentioned earlier both Provinces now have three Scarlet Cord conclaves.

## **8. Consistories.**

Consistories will be responsible for conferring the first three grades of the Order.

Consistories will have the usual permanent officers ie. Episcopus (Chaplain), Treasurer, Registrar, Recorder, Director of Ceremonies etc.

The progressive officers will be President, Primus of Lectores, Primus of Ostiarii, four Lecturers, a Herald and a Guarder.

The officers will be appointed by the President for the time being who, as with other Orders, will be elected and installed in open consistory and generally hold office for one year.

Prior to his installation the President Elect should be a third Grade companion and prepared at a special ceremony arranged at Provincial level. A Provincial Grand Summus may prepare more than one President at a time.

In an Inspectorate it is likely that the Grand Inspector will prepare the President elect in his own consistory, just before his installation. There he may be assisted by consistory officers or visiting companions, present for that purpose.

A companion may be prepared before he is elected to office, ie when he is Primus of Lectores or Primus of Ostiarii. So long as he has been prepared, and is in possession of a patent proving the fact, he may be installed at a later date. It is the possession of the patent which affords the authority.

A companion becomes a distinguished companion when he receives the preparation ceremony and not when he is installed. However he must be an Installed President before he can be received into the Fourth Grade.

## **9. The OSM Benevolent Fund.**

Although the Order was originally re-formed to enhance the OSM Benevolent Fund so that it could support a fund-matching scheme for Provincial charitable donations. It has now been decided that the requirement for OSC companions to contribute to the fund to progress in the Order will cease forthwith.

The reasons are as follows:

- i. It was not considered right that a brother should have to support one Order to gain prominence in another. (Secret Monitors will still be able to support the OSM Benevolent Fund through the OSM and be able to acquire bars, jewels and collarettes to indicate his support)
- ii. There has been no where near the support for the fund-matching scheme, first feared by the Grand Treasurer mentioned on page 2.
- iii. Provision has been made for an OSC Benevolent Fund in the draft Constitutions and regulations.
- iv. Many senior freemasons were reluctant to join an Order where they were **compelled** to support a charity. They considered that charitable contributions were a private matter.
- v. The imposition of a mandatory charitable contribution adds to the cost of joining the Order and may affect recruitment.

## **10. Grand Officers.**

The Grand Summus will assume the prefix... Most Distinguished

The following Grand Officers will assume the prefix ...Right Distinguished:

Dep. G. Summus.

Assistant G. Summus.

Grand Regent Vicarius (This is a rank offered to companions for exceptional past service)

Provincial Grand Summus.

Grand Chancellor. (this is the highest annual office)

Grand Vice Chancellor.

The following Grand Officers will assume the prefix ...Very Distinguished:

Grand Inspector.

Grand Episcopus.

President of the Executive Committee.

Grand Registrar.

Grand Treasurer.

Grand Recorder.

Grand Director of Ceremonies.

Grand Lecturer.

All other Grand Officers will assume the prefix... Distinguished as they must be Past Presidents before being qualified as a Grand Officer.

A Most Distinguished Companion will receive a salutation of 11 times (\*\* \*\*).

A Deputy or Assistant Grand Summus, Present or Past will receive a salutation of (9 times (\*\* \*\*).

All other Right Distinguished Companion will receive a salutation of 7 times (\*\* \*\*).

A Very Distinguished Companion will receive a salutation of 5 times (\*\* \*\*).

A Distinguished Companion will receive a salutation of 3 times (\*\* \*\*).

## **11. Free Transfers between consistories.**

It has been agreed that for a short period of time, brethren and companions may transfer their allegiances from one SC conclave or consistory to another, without having to pay an additional first annual subscription or founders fee.

Many Provinces and Districts are geographically huge and a brother who joins a SC conclave miles away from his home, just to help establish the Order in the Province or District, would obviously wish to transfer his allegiance if it was considered to open one on his doorstep.

Also Scarlet Cord Conclave No. 500 has nearly 700 members who will never likely assume the chair, it would be far better for them to resign from No. 500 and join a consistory local to them. Their local consistory would not need to pay their first capitation fee to MMH as it would have been paid through No. 500.

## **12. Alteration to Ritual.**

Because of some of the alterations mentioned in this paper the ritual for the first three Grades has had to be amended slightly, especially the openings and who actually does which part of the ritual.

The rituals are currently with the printers and, it is hoped that Provincial Grand Supreme Rulers will attempt to use the new ritual as soon as possible, certainly after 21<sup>st</sup> July.

## **13. Fourth Grade.**

The Fourth Grade had to be almost entirely rewritten and has been conferred on the Grand Consistory Team. It is anticipated that the Provincial Grand Supreme Rulers will receive the Grade in March and further Qualified Companions soon afterwards.

To receive the Fourth Grade a Companion must be an Installed President.

## **14. Fifth and Sixth Grades.**

These Grades have had to be completely rewritten, they are now ready to be conferred on the Consistory Team. It is expected that certain

companions, chosen by the Grand Summus will be admitted to these Grades before the Inauguration.

### **Where are we today?**

The Order has spread apace in this country and abroad, in November 2008 about 100 or so Australians and New Zealanders we admitted in Singapore.

Last February 257 Americans we admitted to the Order in Washington DC and we anticipate admitting another 200 or so this February.

Next Monday 1st February, 36 Frenchmen are coming to MMH to receive the Order, so that they may take it back to France to propagate the Order there.

Leaving those numbers aside, at the time of the OSM Executive Meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> January the Order had a total membership of 1,681.

These members were found in 31 Conclaves. Scarlet Cord Conclave No. 500 being the biggest with 691 members

There are another 12 SC Conclaves in the pipeline and I am confident that there will be about 50 Time Immemorial Consistories forming part of the Grand Senatus on 21<sup>st</sup> July.

I envisage that at least 10 Provinces will have three or more consistories giving them a Provincial Grand Summus and a full officer structure.

I also predict that within 5 years of its inauguration the Order of the Scarlet Cord will have a membership in excess of 5,000.

In closing I would like to pay special recognition to all the members of "The Way Forward Committee" who have worked so hard to get us to where we are today. I would not really want to mention any one member in particular because to do so would lessen the appreciation and respect I hold for the others.

They have all given a lot of their personal time and effort both at the committee meetings and between them. Their telephone bills, like mine, must be astronomical.

I would also like to thank the Provincial and District Grand Supreme Rulers for their tremendous enthusiasm, encouragement and support for this new Order.

Without them the Order would never have achieved the spectacular growth it now enjoys.

**This is our Order, it started from nothing, and we are all part of its success.**

Brian Wareham  
(Chairman “Way Forward Committee”).