

Banner Dedication January 11 2017 Taunton

M.E.G.S.

3rd. Provincial Grand Principal

Officers of Supreme Grand Chapter.

Officers of Provincial Grand Chapter.

Principals in Office.

Companions all.

The four Principal Banners which have been Dedicated this evening have been purchased jointly by the three Chapters who meet in this Masonic Hall, : Chapter of Sincerity 261,Chapter of St George 3158 and Taunton Deane Chapter No. 5221

The reason for the acquisition of the new Banners is that the original Banners have, with age and usage, become almost illegible. The banners which have been replaced have been in use for many years and it is almost certain that they were originally obtained by the Chapter of Sincerity as they obviously pre-date the formation of the Chapter of St George in 1954 and the formation of the Taunton Deane Chapter in 1986.

There is no record in the Archives of the Chapter of Sincerity to indicate when or even if they were purchased.

There is a note in the minutes of the Chapter of Sincerity that on 9th. November 1983 the then M.E.Z. E. Comp David Hartley “drew the attention of the Companions to the Chapter Banners & Ensigns which had been renovated during the summer recess by Comp. Malcolm Plastowe and Mrs. G. Fish, wife of E.Comp. F.A.Fish, H of the Chapter. The M.E.Z. requested that the Scribe E, E. Comp Sidney Honniball thank those involved for undertaking this task.

The Accounts of the Chapter for that year shows an expenditure of £23.00 for repairs to Banners.

As a point of interest the Chapter Subscription at that time was £7.00 P.A. and cost of Dining was £2.75.

I would like to thank Comp. John Owen for his assistance in researching this information .

It is the intention to store the original banners until such time as funds are available, perhaps, by way of donations, when they can be restored and hopefully displayed in the Building.

Of all the furniture in a Royal Arch Chapter probably the most striking is the arrangement of the four principal banners and it is surprising to find that they are only briefly mentioned in the Symbolical Lecture. The images shown on the banners were incorporated into the arms of the Antients Grand Lodge or Atholl Lodge which first appeared in 1764. (Atholl was an informal name for the Grand Lodge as the 3rd. & 4th. Dukes of Atholl had served as Grand Masters for over half of its' 62 years in existence.

I will now endeavour to touch on some of the Symbols on the Principal Banners and whilst I appreciate that many of you will have heard similar explanations in the past we have several recently exalted Companions with us this evening who may not yet have had the benefit of such an explanation.

The Symbolical Lecture states:-

“the four principal banners represent the leading standards of the four divisions of the Isrealite army. They display a man, a lion, an Ox and an Eagle.”

A man to personify intelligence and understanding.

A Lion to represent strength and Power

An Ox to denote patience and assiduity.

And an Eagle to indicate the promptness and celerity with which the will and pleasure of the great I am must ever be executed.”

The four principal banners are ranged behind the three principal's chairs but it is thought that originally they would have been placed at the four Cardinal points surrounding the Tabernacle so that the twelve tribes with their Ensigns were each ranged under their own Division.

The Forty ninth Chapter of Genesis gives us the first list of the twelve tribes of Israel ,when the Patrioch Jacob called them together and blessed them just before he died.

The four banners , together with the ensigns were positioned to guard the jewish encampment, no part of which was ever left unguarded against the approach of spies or enemies. The Tabernacle was placed in the centre and was surrounded by the Levites camp together with their flocks and herds. The Levites did not generally carry arms and they, in turn, were protected by the outer or soldiers camp. The area of the encampment was considerable.

The ensigns of the twelve tribes are now placed to the North and South sides of the vault for convenience in working our ceremonies.

To explain each Banner in a little more detail:

A Man, The Banner of Rueben, to personify intelligence and understanding, it bore the device of man because Rueben was the first born of Jacob. This banner would have been placed at the South side of the tabernacle being the second most important position after that of Judah on the East side. In addition to the tribe of Rueben the tribes of Simeon and Gad would have ranged under this Banner.

The book of Numbers, Chapter 3 informs us that there were 46,500 ranged under the banner of Rueben, 59,300 ranged under the banner of Simeon and 45,650 ranged under the banner of Gad.

A Lion. The Banner of Judah to represent Strength and Power. This Banner was assigned the most important position, at the East side of the Tabernacle ,which, according to the ancient belief of the jews was the was the front or forepart of the world, thus standing in the East they worship God. This tribe counted among it's numbers many of the most noted Prophets who would have exerted their influence in moulding the life of the nation.

In addition to the tribe of Judah the tribes of Issachar and Zebulun,as the children of Leah , ranged under this banner. The book of numbers informs us that 74,600 were ranged under the banner of Judah, 54,400 under the banner of Issachar and 57,400 under the banner of Zebulun.

An Ox The Banner of Ephriam to denote patience and assiduity. This banner was assigned it's position on the West Side of the Tabernacle. Ephraim stepped into the inheritance of his father Joseph and his tribe was elevated to a leading position. In addition the tribes of Manasseh and Benjamin ranged under this Banner. The book of numbers informs us that 40,500 ranged under the banner of Ephriam, 32,200 under the banner of Manasseh and 35,400 under the banner of Benjamin.

An Eagle. To indicate the promptness and celerity with which the will and pleasure of the great I am must ever be executed. This banner was assigned to the tribe of Dan and , being the next largest to Judah was placed to the North side of the Tabernacle. In addition the tribes of Asher and Naphtali were ranged under this banner. The book of numbers again informs us that 62,700 ranged under the banner of Dan, 41,500 under the banner of Asher and 53,400 under the banner of Naphtali.

Companions I hope that you have found this short address of interest. The relationship between the Banners and Ensigns call for a much longer and detailed address but I feel that an extended address is not necessary or appropriate for the dedication of the Four Principal Banners.

There is nothing new in the explanations I have given this evening and most of the details have been extracted from the Volume of the Sacred Law.

Companions I thank you for your attention.

Maldwyn T Davies.

2nd.Pr.G.Prin.