

**PROVINCIAL GRAND LODGE
of
DERBYSHIRE**



MASONIC MENTORING & EDUCATION

**INFORMATION
FOR A
PROSPECTIVE MEMBER**

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Thank you for your interest in becoming a Freemason and in joining our Lodge. This information has been written to help you to understand more about Freemasonry. It explains what you can expect on becoming a member and what will be asked of you.

People become Freemasons for different reasons. For some it is because family or friends are members, or because they are interested in the social fellowship that Freemasonry provides. It may be that they are interested in the traditions and history of Freemasonry, or wish to be part of something that has been described as a force for good. Others join because they recognise Freemasonry as a way of developing themselves.

Whatever your personal reasons for wishing to join, we hope that you will have a long and satisfying association with Freemasonry and that you find within it something that will bring you happiness and friendship.

BECOMING A FREEMASON

Becoming a Freemason involves a number of stages, each designed to ensure that we bring into membership only fit and proper people.

All prospective members have to be sponsored by two existing members of a Lodge, known as the proposer and seconder. In putting you forward to join the Lodge, these two members take on a lasting and important responsibility to support you. They should both have known you for a considerable time.

It is advisable to discuss Freemasonry, and membership, in some detail before making a commitment to actually join. During this time your sponsors may introduce you to other members of the Lodge, offer you more reading material or invite you to a Lodge social event. Please read Appendix 1 to make sure that Freemasonry can offer what you hope and expect.

Once you have decided that you wish to proceed, the next step is to complete an application form. This will ask a number of questions about your motives and background (see Appendix 2).

You will then be asked to attend an interview when you will meet with some experienced members of the Lodge. They will want to be sure that you satisfy our membership criteria, have good motives for joining and are likely to fit in and contribute to the life of the Lodge. If they are satisfied, your candidature will then be proposed at the next meeting of the Lodge and put to a ballot at the following meeting. If that is successful, you will then be brought into membership of, or initiated into, Freemasonry.

This may take a number of months but the time can be put to good use, discussing Freemasonry with your proposer and attending Lodge social events. And throughout the process your proposer, seconder and the secretary of the Lodge will keep you informed on the progress of your application and will help you with your anticipated start in Freemasonry.

You will become a Freemason and a member of our Lodge from the first formal meeting that you attend. Following the ceremony of your initiation at this meeting you will be known as an Entered Apprentice Freemason. Over a number of months, extending up to two years at the most, you will be conducted through two further progressive and separate ceremonies before you become a Master Mason. We will want you to attend all our meetings during this time, so that you can enjoy your involvement within the Lodge and learn more and more about Freemasonry and its practices.

You should also know that once you have become a Freemason you will forever be one. If you decide that Freemasonry is not for you, then you can of course resign from your Lodge. But you will still be a Freemason. Of course, we hope that you will find Freemasonry is right for you and that you will want to continue along the journey you start when you are initiated.

WHAT IS FREEMASONRY?

Organised Freemasonry began in 1717 when four private Lodges meeting in London got together to form the world's first Grand Lodge. Little documented history survives from before this date, although records show that the antiquarian Elias Ashmole was accepted into a Lodge in 1646. It is likely that speculative Freemasonry (as it is known) emerged from operative masons' Lodges (comprising working stonemasons) around the time of the English Civil War. It is thought that people who wanted to create a more tolerant and enlightened society adopted the form and ceremonial used by the operative masons and created speculative Lodges as places where people could meet, irrespective of their political or religious allegiances.

Three hundred years later, Freemasonry continues as a meeting point where people

**Appendix 3
LODGE AND CONTACT INFORMATION**

Lodge Name & No.: _____

Meeting at: _____

Dates/times: _____

My proposer: _____

His telephone: _____

My seconder: _____

His telephone: _____

My mentor: _____

His telephone: _____

Lodge Secretary: _____

His telephone: _____

Interview date: _____

Initiation date: _____

Initiation fees: £ _____

Annual fees: £ _____

- Initiation Checklist:
- Black / dark suit
 - White shirt
 - Black tie
 - Black socks & shoes
 - Payment for fees

can learn and develop the principles and practices of moral and intellectual self-improvement. Freemasonry is:

- One of the oldest and largest fraternal societies in the world.
- The basis of a code of living in today's society, based on good moral and ethical standards.
- An organisation of men who try to live by the principles of integrity and goodwill which unifies them, regardless of their colour, creed, religion, politics or worldly status.
- A not-for-profit organisation that is involved in supporting charity and service to the community.
- A common interest where you can meet and enjoy the company of like minded men from all walks of life.

Its moral teachings are communicated using stories and symbols related to the building of the Old Testament Temple of King Solomon. The structure of the Lodge is based upon that adopted by the mediaeval trade and craft guilds and by the operative stonemasons who built our cathedrals.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF FREEMASONRY?

In simple terms, Freemasonry aims to make good men better, through moral and intellectual self-improvement. Based upon three principles, "Brotherly love", "Relief" and "Truth", Freemasonry impresses upon its members the principles of personal responsibility and morality, encouraging each member to practice in his daily life the lessons taught through the symbolic ceremonies held within the lodge. Although these stories and symbols are from times of long ago, we relate their relevance to modern Freemasonry and to today's society as a whole. We describe Freemasonry as a personal journey of enlightenment and as a special way of life.

Freemasonry also has an important part to play in a world where the only constant is change. It sometimes appears that every known thing in today's world is changing at an ever increasing and sometimes alarming rate. With our principles, which have survived many changes for over three hundred years, our organisation will provide you with a solid foundation upon which to anchor yourself and will encourage you to accept and move with the changes evident in the wider world.

WHAT FREEMASONRY IS NOT!

Since its beginning over three hundred years ago there has been published much misinformation about Freemasonry. For the benefit of every prospective candidate, it is only fair that we tell you what Freemasonry is **not** and what it has never claimed to be. The most important points are as follows:

- Freemasonry is **not a religion**, nor is it a substitute for religion. It has a moral philosophy that we believe is acceptable to people of every religion in the world. Therefore, because there are different ideologies and thoughts in the world and to avoid disharmony, we do not allow discussion of religious issues or doctrines at our meetings.
- Freemasonry is **not a secret society**. The only secrets we have are certain parts of our rituals, namely the means by which we recognise other Masons. These are relevant to the stories within the ceremonies. We keep these available for members only, so that non-members can not falsely claim to be Freemasons. We conduct our meetings in private, like many membership organisations. Every Freemason is free to make his membership known to others, or to keep his membership private, as he so wishes.
- Freemasonry is **not a benefit society**. There are no paid insurance policies to give protection against sickness, death or old age. Nor do members have any right to claim relief from any Masonic charity.
- Freemasonry is **not for promoting social or economic advancement** of its members to the prejudice of non-members. Any member who did so would be liable to Masonic censure.
- Freemasonry is **not connected in any way with a political body** or ideals. A Freemason's political views and beliefs are his own and every lodge will have members who support the many different and divergent political ideologies. For this reason political discussion is not allowed at Masonic assemblies.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP

The three **essential qualifications for membership** to Freemasonry cover spiritual, moral and physical aspects. The qualifications, which you will be asked to declare as applying to yourself on your membership application form, are as follows:

- The essential **spiritual qualification** is that you must believe in a Supreme Being. Membership is open to men of any race or religion who can fulfil this essential qualification and who can satisfy the other two requirements.
- The **moral qualification** is that you must be of good repute, a loyal citizen and obedient to the laws of the land in which you live.
- The **physical qualification** is that you are male and must be at least 21 years old (or at least 18 with a dispensation from the Provincial Grand Master). This age

Appendix 2

DECLARATION MADE ON THE APPLICATION FORM BY CANDIDATES FOR INITIATION

If you are unable to make the following declaration in full, please discuss the matter with your proposer and the Lodge Secretary in confidence. They will make appropriate enquiries and advise you accordingly.

1. My application is entirely voluntary.
2. I understand that my duties as a Freemason would include an overriding duty to obey the laws of any country to which I may be subject.
3. I do not expect, anticipate or seek any preferment or financial benefit as a consequence of my being a member of the Craft.
4. I understand that I may freely declare my membership of the Order on any occasion when I can be seen not thereby to be pursuing any business, professional or personal advantage.
5.
 - a. I have never been convicted by a Court of any offence.
 - b. I have never been the subject of a finding of dishonest or disgraceful conduct.
 - c. I have never been disciplined by any professional, trade or other tribunal.
 - d. I am not awaiting the outcome of proceedings against me before a criminal court or a professional, trade or other tribunal.
 - e. I am not, to the best of my knowledge, the subject of any criminal, professional, trade or other investigation.
6. I am not and have not been in any way connected with any organisation which is quasi-Masonic, imitative of Masonry, or regarded by the Grand Lodge as irregular or as incompatible with the Craft.
7. I undertake that if any paragraph in this declaration should become untrue or misleading at any time before I am made a Mason, I will inform my proposer and seconder without delay, and agree that by presenting myself at the meeting at which I am to be made a Mason I shall represent that this declaration remains true.

If the candidate can not make the declaration in paragraph 5 without qualification, or is in any doubt as to the scope of the paragraph, he must consult his proposer and seconder before signing the form or continuing with his application. Full details of any convictions or any such proceedings must be disclosed to his proposer, seconder and secretary of the Lodge. The certificate of the Grand Secretary confirming that the matters disclosed do not constitute a bar to initiation must then be obtained before the candidate can be proposed in open Lodge. If at any time before initiation this declaration becomes untrue or misleading, a further certificate must be obtained.

Membership of a recognised registered Friendly Society does not come within the category of paragraph 6.

Appendix 1**WHAT A CANDIDATE SHOULD KNOW**

The following is based on an address given by the late R.W.Bro. E.E. Field, Provincial Grand Master for Northamptonshire and Huntingdonshire, at his Installation as Worshipful Master of the Northamptonshire and Huntingdonshire Lodge of Installed Masters No. 3422 in 1951.

1. Freemasonry is a society of men historically linked with mediaeval operative Masons, from whom they derive their private means of recognition, their ceremonial, and many of their customs. Its members adhere to ancient principles of Brotherly love, Relief and Truth not only among themselves but also in their relations with the world at large, and by ritual, precept and example aim to improve themselves morally and intellectually.
2. A basic condition of admission into, and membership of the Order, is a belief in a Supreme Being. This is essential and admits of no compromise.
3. It recognises no distinctions of religion and, while inculcating in each of its members the duties of loyalty and citizenship, it does not permit any of its members, either in Lodge or in their capacity as Freemasons, to discuss theological or political questions.
4. It offers no pecuniary advantages binding one Mason to deal with another, or to support him in any way in the ordinary business relations of life.
5. It has certain Charities, but it is not in any sense whatever a benefit society, nor is it based upon any calculations which would render this possible. The Charities are solely for those who, having been in good circumstances, have been overtaken by misfortune or adversity. Neither a Mason, nor his wife, nor his children have any claim as of right upon them.
6. Masonry teaches that a man's first duty is to himself, his wife, his family and his connections. No one should join the Order who cannot well afford to pay the Initiation fees and subscription both to his Lodge and to the Masonic Charities, and this without detriment to the comfort and well being of those who have any claim on his support.
7. Therefore everyone, before offering himself as a candidate, should be fully assured in his own mind:
 - a. that he sincerely desires the intellectual and moral improvement of himself and his fellow creatures;
 - b. that he is willing to devote part of his time, his means and his efforts in the promotion of brotherly love, relief and truth;
 - c. that he seeks no commercial, social or pecuniary advantages, and
 - d. that he is able to afford the necessary expenditure without injury to himself or his connections.

qualification exists to ensure that you are free to formulate your opinions, and exercise your own judgement.

Wives, partners and families of members are, of course, encouraged to enjoy many of the social aspects of Freemasonry, but only men are eligible for membership of Lodges under the United Grand Lodge of England. This qualification dates back to the earliest days of operative Masonry when only men would be accepted as apprentices. It has long been one of the principles of mutual recognition that exists between the many national Grand Lodges around the world and it is unlikely that all of these Grand Lodges would agree to change this requirement. However, there are women only Grand Lodges founded on similar principles and they have subordinate private Lodges meeting around the country, including in Derbyshire.

WHAT FREEMASONRY CAN OFFER

Freemasonry is a way of life in which members can meet regularly to be active in the support of their ideals and of the community at large. What you will get out of membership of Freemasonry will be a reflection of the effort you make to learn, to contribute to the life of your Lodge and to integrate with its other members. **We are sure that you will gain far more from your membership than you expect, by becoming a Freemason and a more useful citizen in your community.**

There are no mandates associated with your membership. After becoming a Master Mason you may wish to contribute to the ceremonies and progress through the various offices until you become, for one year, the Master of the Lodge and preside over its meetings. This step-by-step annual progression, supported by experienced members of the Lodge, offers a very rewarding learning experience which will deepen your understanding of Freemasonry and develop your skills and self-confidence.

Alternatively you may be content to remain as a member without office and just enjoy the fraternal gatherings. However, we do hope that – like most members - you will decide to progress through the various offices to become the Master of this Lodge.

WHAT FREEMASONRY ASKS OF YOU

Freemasonry is judged largely by the actions and lives of its individual members. When a man is known to be a Freemason, his behaviour becomes the standard by which those who know him judge our organisation. To ensure that our reputation remains impeccable we expect you to maintain the standards set out in the qualifications for membership.

We would also like all members to attend each meeting of the Lodge. Each Lodge meets on set dates each year, known as regular meetings. It is worth putting the

regular meeting dates in your diary as recurring appointments. Regular attendance will help you to learn about Freemasonry and to get to know the other members of the Lodge.

It is especially important to attend all regular meetings when you accept an office in the Lodge. If you are unable to attend for any reason please make this known at an early stage so that someone else can prepare to discharge your duties. Officers are also asked to attend rehearsals of the Lodge ceremonies. Rehearsals are more informal meetings held approximately one week before each regular meeting.

If you take on one of the progressive ceremonial offices you will be asked to learn some ritual and to help with part of the ceremony. The work involved is impressive when first encountered but the ability to do ritual is built up gradually over a period of years, with help from others. Nevertheless, learning ritual does take some effort and commitment and you should be aware of this in advance. Some Lodges hold a more frequent "Lodge of Instruction" to help members learn the ritual.

You will be encouraged to visit other Lodges, so that you can witness the ceremonies through which you have passed and so that you can widen your circle of Masonic friends. Visiting is very popular among the seventy plus Lodge across Derbyshire and adds to the sense of fraternal fellowship experienced at our meetings.

The Lodge will also hold occasional social events for our members, our wives and partners, visitors from other Lodges and other non-Masonic guests. These are important events in the life of the Lodge and offer an excellent means for friends and family members to share in our Freemasonry.

These are the major time and conduct expectations that we have of our members. However, it is worth emphasising one of our key tenets at this point.

Freemasonry demands and expects that every member will place the needs of his family first, his obligations to his vocation second and, only after these have been satisfied, that he discharges his duties to Freemasonry.

In addition to time and conduct, there are certain financial responsibilities associated with your membership, just as there are costs in membership of any organisation. While in comparison these are not too onerous, it is right that you should know what they are. Costs include the fees governed by the Lodge's by-laws and other incidental charges and are:

- A one-off **initiation fee** payable prior to joining the Lodge. This covers your registration with Grand Lodge, and the provision of a certificate which will be presented to you after your third ceremony on becoming a Master Mason.

AFTER YOUR FIRST MEETING

You will have many questions after your first meeting. You will not remember everything that has been said during the evening but you will want to recall as much as you can and find out more about its meaning.

It will be a good idea to arrange to meet with your sponsors and your mentor soon afterwards, so that you can discuss what happened, as well your thoughts and feelings. They will be very helpful and will provide you with further information and some reading materials.

It would also be a good idea to arrange with your sponsors or mentor to visit another Lodge, to see the same ceremony that you have been through. This will help you to recollect your own initiation and things will then begin to fall into place.

It will be some weeks before the Lodge meets again. A few weeks beforehand you will receive a "summons" reminding you that the meeting will take place and telling you what is planned for that meeting. It will invite you to book in to the meeting and for the meal. Please help the Lodge officers by responding to the summons as soon as you receive it, so that planning can go smoothly.

CONCLUSION

Freemasonry constantly strives to receive trustworthy men into its ranks and, through its teachings, will help you to appreciate the friendships and contribute to society in general. Men like yourself, who we hope will actively participate at our meetings, will enjoy a unique comradeship and develop a confidence in communicating with others that will enable you to put our Masonic ideals to good effect.

Please remember, to want to become a Freemason must be your decision and yours alone. But like most of our members, you may wish you had joined sooner!

Tony Harvey
Provincial Grand Mentor

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We wish to acknowledge the work of the Provincial Grand Lodges of Gloucestershire and of Essex, and other provinces that have produced Mentoring materials, to whom we extend our grateful thanks for their kind assistance.

maintain contact with you and invite you to any open meetings or social functions held by the Lodge, where you will be able to meet some of the members.

WHAT HAPPENS ON YOUR FIRST VISIT TO THE LODGE?

Your proposer will probably pick you up and take you to your first meeting. Please make sure you follow the dress code listed above. There is a checklist included with this booklet to help. On arrival at the meeting your proposer will introduce you to various members of the Lodge who will play a part in the ceremony. These will include the Worshipful Master, the Junior Deacon and the Tyler of the Lodge. They will explain some simple elements of the proceedings and put you at your ease.

In keeping with the traditions of our operative forebears, you will be blindfolded and brought into the Lodge room to take part in a simple but solemn ceremony which has been basis of Freemasonry for the past 300 years. During this ceremony you will hear a number of short addresses on the aims and objectives of Freemasonry and on your part. You will also be asked to promise to:

- Preserve the customs of the Lodge
- Obey the civil laws of the Country
- To be kind and thoughtful to others
- Not to discuss religious or political matters within the Lodge
- Not to reveal the methods of recognition by which we identify each other in the Lodge
- Not to use Freemasonry for personal gain.

After you have made this promise the blindfold will be removed.

At all times you will be accompanied by one of the Lodge members, the Junior Deacon, who will guide you through the ceremony. During the ceremony you will become a member of our Lodge and of worldwide Freemasonry.

Afterwards, during the meal, you will then have the opportunity to meet many new friends and most probably renew friendships with other men you have met outside of Freemasonry. It is customary for new members to be the subject of a welcoming toast after the meal. The toast will be proposed by your proposer and it is normally the case that you will be invited to respond with a few brief words of thanks. Your proposer will advise you on the form of words and give you any help that you need.

We hope that you will approach your initiation with an open mind, wishing to absorb as much as you can. Pleaser remember that one of the things that binds us together as brother Masons is that every single person present will themselves have gone through exactly the same ceremony, and all the emotions that go with it, as you.

- An **annual membership fee** payable to the Lodge. The Lodge uses this to run and administer the Lodge, to maintain its facilities (either to cover the rent of premises or the maintenance of owned buildings) and to pay to Grand Lodge and to the Provincial Grand Lodge of Derbyshire all membership fees due from you.
- A **dining fee** at each meeting. All Masonic meetings conclude with a sit down meal. The meals are an important part of the Masonic experience and complement the ceremonial aspect of the meeting. Dining fees are very reasonable.
- You are likely to be asked to make a regular **donation to Masonic charity**. If appropriate in your circumstances this can be under a gift-aid declaration. Masonic charities raise money for Masonic and non-Masonic causes and, after the National Lottery, are the second biggest contributor to charity in this country.
- In due time, once you have progressed to become a Master Mason, you will need to acquire your own **regalia**. At that point you will only require an apron and white gloves, but other items may be needed as you progress further.

Your proposer or the Lodge Secretary will be able to tell you how much these various costs will be.

At various times you may also be asked to contribute time or money to **charitable projects** being organised by the Lodge or by the Province of Derbyshire. Your contribution must at all times be determined by **what your circumstances will permit**. This is for you to determine and at no time should you place your personal financial viability at risk. Any contribution you do make to charity will be kept private between you and the Lodge's Charity Steward. It will not be publicised or shared with other members.

The dress code is a black or dark suit, white shirt, black socks, black shoes and a black tie. After you become a Freemason you will eligible to wear the Provincial tie which can be worn within Derbyshire. The Lodge will provide your regalia until you become a Master Mason.

THE LODGE STRUCTURE

Within the international world of Freemasonry, the most important entity to you will be your Lodge. Worldwide there are Grand Lodges that govern specific geographical territories and each individual lodge relies on its own Grand Lodge for the setting of

standards and for recognition with other Grand Lodges. The controlling body over our Lodge is the **United Grand Lodge of England** with over 300,000 members working in nearly 8,000 lodges in England and Wales.

Lodges also come under the jurisdiction of a Provincial Grand Lodge. In our case, we are part of the **Provincial Grand Lodge of Derbyshire**, which has around 3,000 members.

Every Lodge is presided over by a Master, who normally holds office for a year, and who will be pleased to meet and receive you at your first Lodge meeting. He is supported by a number of Lodge Officers, some of whom help to run the Lodge and some of whom take an active part in each ceremony.

We are obliged, by Grand Lodge rules, to ensure that all Candidates for joining Freemasonry are elected by secret ballot of the Lodge members. Other decisions concerning financial and administrative affairs are democratically made in open lodge by all the Lodge members present. Voting is usually by show of hands, but if the Master deems it necessary, decisions may be made by secret ballot, ensuring that at all times the will of the majority prevails. As soon as you join the Lodge you will become eligible to vote on matters concerning the Lodge.

Your proposer will have explained to you on which night the Lodge meets and in which months of the year. It is expected that you will make every effort to attend the Lodge at each of its meetings, to receive maximum benefit from your membership and to assist those who rely on your attendance. Regular Lodge Meeting dates are fixed and can be put in your diary each year well in advance.

Each Lodge meeting usually includes a ceremony to bring new members into Freemasonry or to take them to the next step towards becoming a Master Mason. Once a year the ceremony will be to Install a new Master, following which he will appoint and invest his officers for that year. It is normal for members in "progressive office" to move to the next office towards being themselves the Master of the Lodge.

At meetings where there is no ceremony there may be a guest speaker giving a talk on a subject of Masonic interest or there may simply be a discussion among the Lodge members.

Following the meetings, the members and their visitors usually gather in the dining room for a meal, known as the festive – or social – board, and to enjoy each other's company in a relaxed and informal environment.

Visiting other lodges, either in this Province or for that matter anywhere in the world, is always an enjoyable experience. It will give you the opportunity to increase your circle

of Masonic friends, learn how other lodges conduct ceremonies (there are often differences between the practices adopted by different Lodges) and generally to enjoy the wider Masonic life that membership brings in a less formal environment.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

After you have completed the membership application form you will be asked to attend an interview with experienced members of the Lodge. The committee will want to know about:

- You, your background, interests, family and previous exposure to Freemasonry
- What first attracted you to Freemasonry and why you are interested in becoming a member
- What you understand about, and expect from, Freemasonry
- Whether being a member will cause you any personal difficulties
- The fundamental requirement that you believe in a Supreme Being.

They will also want to discuss:

- The costs of membership, including subscriptions, dining, charity, visiting, regalia, etc
- Their expectations of your attendance at Lodge, rehearsals, etc, and of you becoming involved in the work of the Lodge, its ritual and taking office
- Your own questions
- And finally, as a check, whether the declarations you made on the application form are still correct (see Appendix 2).

Once you have been interviewed by this committee, the Lodge Secretary will inform you of its decision and let you know the timetable for your admission. This will be confirmed after the Lodge has approved your membership by ballot at a regular Lodge meeting.

You will also be told who will act as your mentor. A mentor is an experienced Freemason who will support you through your early years as a member. He will provide you with further information, help you to find answers to your various questions and generally guide you through your early years.

Your mentor may be your proposer or seconder. If they are unable to spend the time needed, or are perhaps relatively new to Freemasonry themselves, the Lodge may ask another member to act as your mentor. But your proposer and seconder will always be there to assist.

In the lead up to your initiation, a member of the Lodge such the secretary will