

The Loyal Vacation Lodge (6209)
The Entered Apprentice's Handbook



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Freemasonry – A Brief History

Modern speculative Freemasonry as we practice it, originated in Britain and our headquarters are located at Great Queen Street, London. Private lodges like ours however meet not only all over Britain but all over the world.

You will hear many theories on how Freemasonry came into being. The most popular thought is that it is derived from the mediaeval guild of operative masons who built the magnificent cathedrals and churches spread throughout the land and some of our ritual and much of our symbolism indeed strengthens this theory.

The operative Masons were mostly illiterate and thus the ritual was developed as a mechanism by which they could define and determine the ability and therefore the ability of and wages due to the different levels of the operative Masons which were learned in the form of a 'Mystery play' committed to memory.

It is probable that the tolerant and accepting, poly-religious environment in which the antient operative Masons gathered were attractive to the intellectuals during the post-reformation years, such as the members of the Royal Society who found that the Religion they practiced aggressively excluded them from meeting other intellectuals who subscribed to 'conflicting' Religions.

Their researches, especially into the fields of physics, biology, astronomy and mathematics were to uncover and disclose within nature, perfect shape, motion, symmetry and sequence and as their own Religious teachings had been that only God was capable of perfection, then by iteration, Science was truly God given and any texts created by them would include trigonometry as being the newly disclosed gift from God.

It was around this time that the ritual was first transcribed and it is of little surprise that once accepted and authorised to form their own Lodges, these intellectuals naturally adapted the ritual to reflect their own beliefs.

The truth is however, that we simply do not know the derivations for sure but most importantly, it does not actually matter.

What we do know is that Freemasonry as we would recognise it came into being on the feast day of St John the Baptist in 1717, when the first Grand Lodge was established. Sadly, there was subsequent dissension between two groups of Lodges who mainly disagreed about the ritual wording and the degrees worked. The infighting between the 'Antients' and 'Moderns' was not fully resolved until 1813 when the two 'Grand Lodges' were reconciled into what we know today as the United Grand Lodge of England. This is the body which now governs Freemasonry in England and Wales and Districts overseas.

Lodge of Instruction (LoI)

As I'm sure you appreciate, the ceremony you experienced didn't happen without some considerable organisation and rehearsal. The Loyal Vacation Lodge holds a rehearsal evening where the ceremony that you experienced (which is one of four similarly complex ceremonies) was fully rehearsed.

Attendance of these is optional, but they enable you not only to meet the members of your Lodge in a more social environment, but more importantly to gain confidence about the part you should play when your time comes to participate in a ceremony.

We don't limit ourselves to rehearsing ritual and ceremonies, but also devote time to instruction. This is an opportunity to learn not only what we do, but why we do it from more experienced Brethren.

The Lodge of Instruction, is presided over by a Preceptor who organises the meeting and oversees the work, and your Mentor will certainly introduce you to him.

Some Lodges hold joint' rehearsal evenings with other Lodges, so you are welcome to attend a more convenient one of these if you are unable to attend our LoI.

Second Degree Questions and Answers

You are now an Entered Apprentice Freemason (EA) and you will no doubt at some stage be invited to take your second step in Freemasonry. In order to achieve this, you will have to prove your proficiency as an EA. These are the questions you will be asked and the **answers** you are to give:

Some of the words are abbreviated. Your Proposer or the Lodge Mentor will give you these verbally.

W.M. Where were you first prepared to be made a Mason?

Cand. In my h.

W.M. Where next?

Cand. In a convenient room adjoining the Lodge.

W.M. Describe the mode of your preparation?

Cand. I was d...v...d of m...l and h...w...d. My r a, l b, and k were made b, my r h was s s and a c t placed about my n.

W.M. Where were you made a Mason?

Cand. In the body of a Lodge, just, perfect and regular.

W.M. And when?

Cand. When the Sun was at its meridian.

W.M. In this country Freemasons' Lodges are usually held in the evening; how do you account for that, which at the first view appears a paradox?

Cand. The earth constantly revolving on its axis in its orbit around the Sun, and

Freemasonry being universally spread over its surface, it necessarily follows that the Sun is always at its meridian with respect to Freemasonry.

W.M. What is Freemasonry?

Cand. A peculiar system of morality, veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols.

W.M. Name the grand principles on which the Order is founded?

Cand. Brotherly love, relief and truth.

W.M. Who are fit and proper persons to be made Masons?

Cand. Just, upright and free men, of mature age, sound judgement and strict morals.

W.M. How do you know yourself to be a Mason?

Cand. By the regularity of my initiation, repeated trials and approbations, and a

willingness at all times to undergo an examination when properly called on.

W.M. How do you demonstrate the p of your being a Mason to others?

Cand. By sns, ts, and the perfect pts of my entrance.

Festive Board

The Festive Board is the meal held after most Lodge meetings and in some Lodges varies in type from buffet to banquet, according to the wishes of the members. This is always a convivial occasion, but should be considered as much a part of the evening as the Ceremony in the Lodge, albeit in a more relaxed atmosphere.

The meal following the Installation meeting is usually more lavish than those following the other meetings.

There is usually a formal seating plan and if you are unsure, you should ask the Assistant secretary where you should sit. If there is no plan then simply pick one, but avoid the top table and the two seats on the end of any 'sprigs' as these are reserved for the 'Wardens'.

As well as the meal, the evening will consist of:

- Grace
- Wine takings
- Toasts
- Grace (sung)
- Speeches

You may possibly be asked to act as a Steward and if so, you should look upon it as an opportunity to serve the Lodge and play a part, rather than something intrusive which interferes with your meal.

There is no specific Masonic grace, but grace should always be said, usually by the Lodge Chaplain, before the meal and thanks returned afterwards.

At some convenient moment during the meal, the Worshipful Master will recognise the presence of certain other Brethren by 'taking wine with them', for example a Representative of the Provincial Grand Master or a Visiting Grand Officer. Those named stand, raise their glass and take a sip of whatever is in the glass. The content of the glass does not have to be wine or even alcohol of any sort.

During the evening we will have various toasts. You only don't get up if you are one of the below, or Masonically senior to them:

- The Queen and the Craft
- The Grand Master
- The Pro Grand Master, Deputy Grand Master, Assistant Grand Master and Grand Officers present and past
- The Provincial (or Metropolitan) Grand Master
- The Deputy Provincial Grand Master, the Assistant Provincial Grand Masters and the rest of the Provincial Grand Officers present and past

(amend as necessary for Metropolitan, District or holders of London Grand Rank)

- The Worshipful Master
- The Initiate (if applicable)
- The Visitors (optional)
- All poor and distressed Freemasons (known as the Tyler's Toast)

Toasts are usually followed by Masonic Fire which is a gesture made with the hands and followed by clapping after each toast. It may take its origin from the tradition of firing a 21 gun salute following celebrations, but there is no certainty as to its origin. It is not done when non-masons are present.

The Worshipful Master, or his Director of Ceremonies, uses the gavel to claim the attention of the Brethren and the gavel will be repeated by his Wardens just as they do in the Lodge Room. When the gavel is used, the Brethren should heed it and cease conversation immediately.

You may leave the table if necessary, but should try to avoid it if possible. The chairs of the Worshipful Master and his two Wardens are not left unoccupied and should one of them need to leave his seat, they would ask another Brother to occupy it in their stead temporarily.

You will already have briefly responded to a speech made by your Proposer when you were toasted following your Initiation and you will probably not be called upon to do so again for some time. When you are eventually asked, here are some tips:

- Keep it short and relevant.
- Avoid offensive content.
- Start with a standard preamble: 'Worshipful Master, Distinguished Guests, Brethren all. . .' However, the preamble will depend upon who is present, so listen carefully to the preceding toasts and follow suit.
- If someone is replying to your speech, you should call upon him to do so after Masonic Fire has been given (If he is a visitor, you can say: "I now call upon Bro XYZ from the ABC Lodge number 9999 for a response.")

Regulations and Authority

The Loyal Vacation Lodge, like any other, is warranted by the United Grand Lodge of England and you are entitled and indeed encouraged to review the Warrant at any Lodge evening.

It is a patent issued by the Grand Master at the time of the Lodge's consecration defining it as a Lodge, listing the members who consecrated the Lodge and the reason the Lodge's formation.

When consecrated, every Lodge subscribes to the United Grand Lodge of England (UGLE) and the consecration team agree that the Lodge will not make changes to the fundamental constitutions which are listed in the Book of Constitutions which in themselves are a list of regulations that apply to Freemasons subscribing to UGLE.

There HAVE to be differences between Lodges, so these 'differences' as listed in the Lodges By-Laws which stipulate where the Lodge meets, what the fees are and under what circumstances the By-Laws can be amended.

The running of the Lodge is down to the General Purposes Committee (GP) who are generally the Elders of the Lodge plus the Worshipful Master, his two Wardens and a nominated junior member who makes sure the opinion of the junior brethren is properly represented at the GP meeting.

There are generally at least two GP meetings a year which are called by the Lodge Secretary.

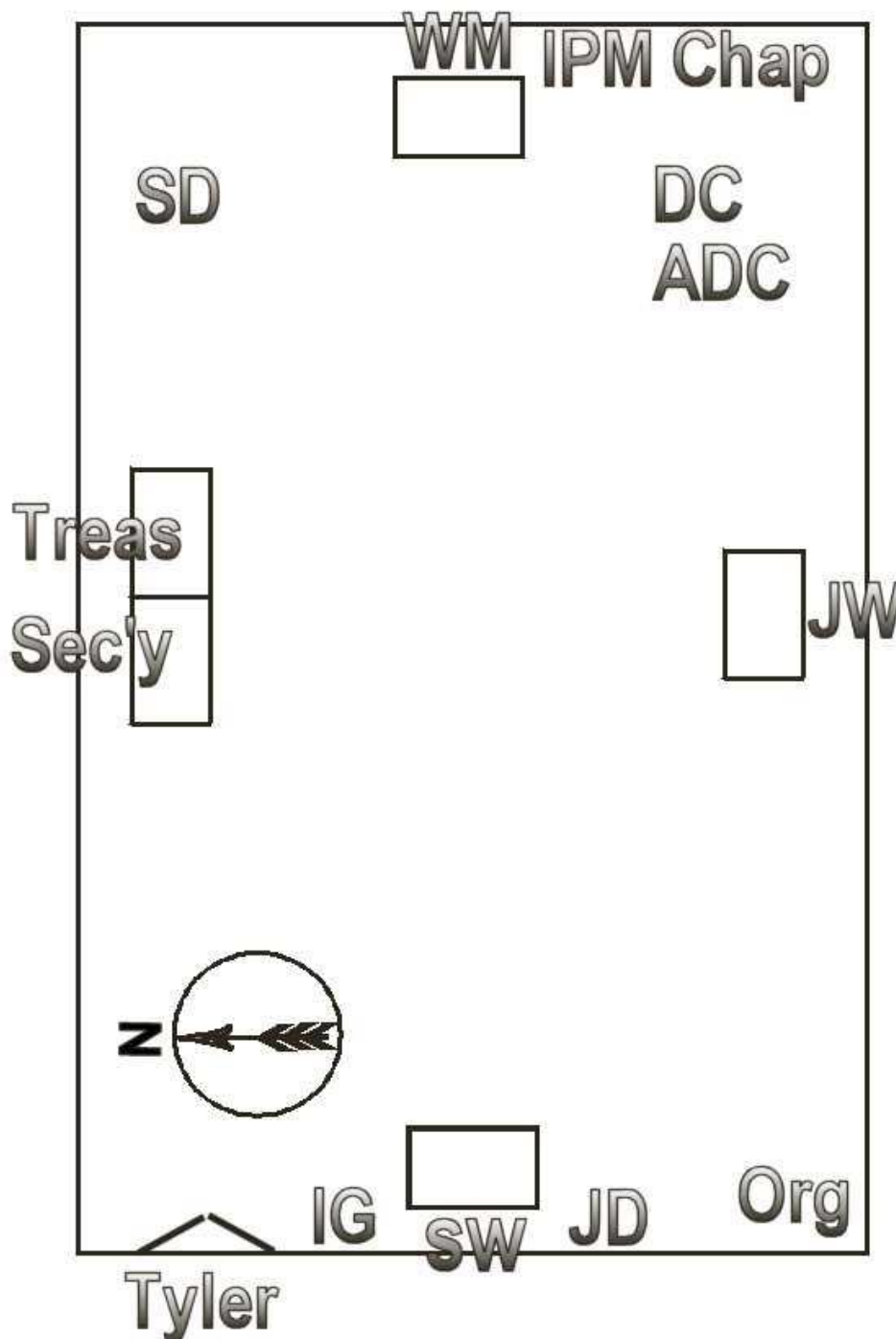
At the GP meeting typically;

- the Secretary will indicate if the Lodge has applications for membership and the candidate(s) will be interviewed if present.
- the Treasurer will recommend a suitable level of annual membership subscription that will allow the annual fee from UGLE to be paid, the annual fee from Provincial Grand Lodge to be paid, plus the fees associated with the day to day running of the Lodge. (e.g. insurance, room hire, regalia costs etc.)
- the Director of Ceremonies will report on the ceremonies to be carried out at subsequent meetings and thus the rehearsal schedule.
- Any other Brother will have an opportunity to voice any points or concerns he / they may have and these are discussed to resolution.

The Lodge Room

The room in which the meetings and ceremonies are conducted is called the 'Lodge Room'. You may find some of the Brethren referring to it as 'The Temple', but this is actively discouraged, as use of the word 'Temple' has misplaced religious connotations.

All Masonic Lodges are laid out similarly but there are often differences, mainly because of the position of the doors and emergency exit. The concept of the Cardinal points is purely notional, but here's how one should generally look:



Lodge Officers

A Masonic Lodge is not a building or a room; it is a group of people making up a unit referred to as 'a Lodge'.

The workings, transactions and ceremonial of the Lodge revolve around its officers. Any member may be invited to take part in the proceedings, by learning and then performing part of the ceremony, which may be anything from a couple of sentences to pieces taking 10 minutes or more to deliver.

The officers that must be appointed are known as the regular officers and are the Master, his two Wardens, a Treasurer, a Secretary, two Deacons, an Inner Guard and a Tyler.

The Master must appoint as additional officers an Almoner and a Charity Steward and may also appoint as additional officers; a Chaplain, a Director of Ceremonies, an Assistant Director of Ceremonies, an Organist, an Assistant Secretary and a Steward (or Stewards). No Brother can hold more than one regular office in the Lodge at one and the same time, but the Master may appoint a Brother who is holding a regular office, to also hold an 'additional' Office.

All these officers can be recognised by the fact that they wear a broad light blue collar. To each of these collars is attached a jewel which represents that office which are:

Worshipful Master

The qualification required to be eligible for election to Master is that the Brother should have served for a full year as a Senior or Junior Warden. The Master is effectively the CEO. He is responsible for the opening and closing of the Lodge, and depending on the business to be transacted, the Master will call upon various Brethren to carry out particular duties, although many will be carried out by the Master himself.

The Jewel appended to the Master's Collar is the **Square**;

He may also wear a **Hallstone Jewel** during the meeting and the following Festive Board if his Lodge was a significant contributor to the rebuilding of the facility at Great Queen Street.

Wardens

The Senior and Junior Warden assist the Worshipful Master in the running of the Lodge. The Wardens have the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the work of the Master and have time to learn the ritual required.

The Jewel appended to the Senior Warden's Collar is the **Level** and that to the Junior Warden's Collar is the **Plumb Rule**.

Chaplain

The Office of Chaplain is not surprisingly, a devotional one. He offers the prayers of the Lodge, but need not be a man of the cloth. He should be prepared to be approached by the membership for spiritual nourishment and instruction.

The Jewel appended to the Chaplain's Collar is the **VSL on a triangle**, surmounting a **sunburst**.

Treasurer

The qualification for Treasurer is that he is a member of the Lodge. He is elected rather than appointed, and is responsible for the receipt and banking of funds, making payments and the production of a set of accounts. He also submits an annual statement of accounts for auditing and circulation to the members of the Lodge, and provides the financial control over the Lodge income and expenditure.

The Jewel appended to the Treasurer's Collar is a **Key**.

Secretary

The Secretary is responsible for the business of the meeting. He keeps the Lodge minutes and is responsible for the general paperwork, including the issue of summonses the Annual Returns to Grand Lodge, maintaining records of Members' change in status and maintaining the signature book. He is also responsible for liaison with Metropolitan / Provincial Grand Lodge, dealings with other Lodges and for communications from and to members.

He is expected to have a sound knowledge of, or good access to, the regulations of the Craft, as he may be consulted by the Master on points of procedure.

The Jewel appended to the Secretary's Collar is **Two Pens** in Saltire, tied by a **ribbon**.

Director of Ceremonies (DC)

The DC is responsible for the ceremonial of the Lodge and the smooth running of the meeting. He should ensure that all articles necessary for a meeting are laid out correctly, and will arrange processions in and out of the Lodge Room. He also attends to matters of protocol, such as the correct way to receive important visitors and give salutations to Grand Officers.

He is also responsible for the manner in which the after meeting is conducted in the Dining Room.

The Jewel appended to the Director of Ceremonies' Collar is **Two Rods** in Saltire, tied by a **ribbon**.

Deacons

The Senior and Junior Deacons are the two officers who conduct the Candidate through the various ceremonies. They are largely responsible for the success of any ceremony and they need to have knowledge of, and the confidence to carry out their duties. As far as the ceremony is concerned, a Lodge with two efficient Deacons will rarely go wrong.

The Jewel appended to the Deacons' Collars is a **Dove and Olive Branch**.

Charity Steward

The Charity Steward is basically a fund-raiser for the various causes determined by the Master during his year in the 'Chair'. His prime responsibility is to collect and raise monies.

A successful Charity Steward will understand the advantages of giving using Gift Aid and be conversant with Standing Orders etc. He disseminates information about the various Charities and donations during the meetings as this encourages Brethren to be as generous as their personal circumstances allow.

The Jewel appended to the Charity Steward's Collar is a **Trowel**.

Almoner

The Almoner keeps in touch with members and their families in times of illness or distress. Lodge funds can be allocated to the Almoner for specific purposes, such as the distribution of Christmas cards and gifts to Masonic widows.

Typically an Almoner arranges visits to those in hospital, organises practical help for members when they or their families are in difficulties, and visits or calls members who find themselves unable to attend meetings.

The Almoner provides an individual Brother with a very important link to various sources of assistance. With the help of the Almoner, Brethren can receive assistance in times of poverty or distress and this facility is of course provided in total confidence.

The Jewel appended to the Almoner's Collar is a **Scrip-purse**, upon which is a **Heart**.

Assistant Director of Ceremonies (ADC)

The ADC assists the Director of Ceremonies at various times during the ceremony. It is a good role for someone wanting eventually to take on the role of DC.

The Jewel appended to the Assistant Director of Ceremonies' Collar is **Two Wands in Saltire** surmounted by a bar bearing the word '**Assistant**'.

Organist

An Organist really does make a huge difference to the atmosphere of a Lodge Meeting. His ability to interpret the proceedings adds enormously to the drama and tension of the ceremony.

The Organist may not need to be an experienced keyboard player as someone with an iPad or tablet with speakers may be equally placed to provide music during the ceremonies.

The Jewel appended to the Organist's Collar is a **Lyre**.

Mentor

The Lodge Mentor is responsible for the satisfaction of each member with their current role and status and ensures that they are receiving Masonic education in a way that is suitable to them.

The collar of the Mentor is **two chisels** in saltire

Assistant Secretary

The role of the Assistant Secretary, varies considerably between Lodges, his role is frequently to organise the dining and the table plan.

In some instances, the role is a useful first step to becoming Secretary.

The Jewel appended to the Assistant Secretary's Collar is **Two Pens in Saltire**, surmounted by a bar bearing the word '**Assistant**'.

Inner Guard

The Inner Guard, often a fairly inexperienced member, has the responsibility of admitting and in some instances announcing those entitled to be present.

It is the first step in the progression to the Master's Chair and the requirement for him to work on the floor of the Lodge will provide him with a greater appreciation of the ceremonies carried out in the Lodge Room.

The Jewel appended to the Inner Guard's Collar is **Two Swords in Saltire**.

Tyler

The Tyler has to be a Master Mason simply so that he knows how to prepare the Candidate for the ritual being performed, but the Tyler does not necessarily have to be a member of the Lodge.

Generally speaking though he is a more experienced Mason who can put the candidate at his ease, and answer any questions he may have about what is about to happen.

His role is also to ensure only persons entitled to be present are allowed entry.

The Jewel appended to the Tyler's Collar is a **Sword**.

Stewards

Stewards are generally the newer members, and arguably have one of the most important duties of the Lodge, which is to look after the needs of the visitors and the Brethren. Carrying out these duties provides the Steward with the opportunity to meet and talk with many members of the Lodge and, in turn, allows the Brethren to get to know the newer members.

The Stewards should also be ready to stand in for an officer so regular attendance at Lol will enable him to learn the duties required of him.

The Jewel appended to the Steward's Collar is a **Cornucopia** (also known as the Horn of Plenty).

There are other 'statuses' which may be briefly explained:

Immediate Past Master

This is the Brother who was Master last year. He has usually learned the entire ritual and procedure during the previous year, so will hopefully have the ritual in his head making him the ideal person to prompt the Master should he require a prompt or advice on a point of protocol.

Lodge Examiners

These are two Brethren who are responsible for auditing the work of the Treasurer prior to their presentation to the membership for approval. The Examiners should be prepared to state at that meeting that the accounts are in order.

GP Committee representatives

Most Lodges allow representation from the less experienced membership at the General Purposes Committee meetings. This ensures that the opinions and attitudes of all Brethren are represented when decisions that affect the future of the Lodge are discussed.

Royal Arch Representative

Most Lodges appoint a Royal Arch Representative. His role is to seek out any member interested in completing his Third Degree and potentially seeking spiritual fulfilment as there are other avenues within Freemasonry which allow the individual to extend their depth of understanding.

Office Progression

Some offices as Lodge Secretary, Treasurer, Director of Ceremonies, Almoner and Charity Steward as these are offices that benefit from a period of continuity and a period of between four and seven years is frequent.

Apart from the ultimate office of 'Master', the other offices in order of seniority are:

- Senior Warden
- Junior Warden
- Senior Deacon
- Junior Deacon
- Inner Guard
- Steward

In many Lodges there is what may be described as 'a ladder system' with each officer progressing one step up the ladder at the annual Installation meeting.

Although the appointment of all officers, other than those elected, is as previously stated in the gift of the Worshipful Master, a wise Master will adhere to established sensible practice in order to maintain harmony within his Lodge.

It is not compulsory for members to advance through the offices, but under normal circumstances, a member should not accept a progressive office unless he is prepared to advance to the Master's Chair.

Symbolic Explanation of the Ceremony of Initiation

Whilst the friendships made are extremely important and not to be underestimated in any way, the key to enjoying your Freemasonry to the full lies in understanding it.

However, in coming to understand the meaning of our Ceremonies, we have a problem, for different Brethren will interpret them in different ways. What is more, none of them will be wrong. After all, if we were all able to understand the Ceremonies in a uniform manner, there would be little point in coming to our Lodges to witness them time after time, as their significance could perhaps be explained in a single visit. Over a period of time, the ritual you see, hear and learn, will prompt you to think about it more widely and more deeply.

This will lead you to consider the one constant that should be in our minds - How can we improve ourselves as building blocks for the Temple we are contemplating? This is a challenging concept for anyone who has just been initiated and gone through a Ceremony that may be viewed on the evening of their Initiation as confusing, perhaps somewhat bizarre and more than likely a little nerve wracking!

The ceremony represents the birth of Man. At birth we are all naked, without possessions and rely upon the help and guidance of others until we reach maturity and can, in turn, extend help to others. You may remember that just before you entered the Lodge Room you were confronted with the challenge, -- "Do you feel anything?" This symbolic challenge was designed to intimate to you that you were about to engage in something serious and solemn. A second challenge awaited you inside the door of the Lodge; "Are you free?" After you vowed that you were free of any bondage, the blessing of the Almighty was invoked upon the proceedings.

Then almost immediately came the third and most important challenge of all, "In all cases of difficulty and danger, in whom do you put your trust?" There is, of course, only one answer to this question. "In God" of the name of the individual's Supreme Being. To avoid possible offence and to promote unity among all men, the Supreme Being of all denominations is referred to as the Great Architect of the Universe.

The hoodwink or blindfold that you wore represented the darkness before birth and education and also made it possible for you to be led from the Lodge Room without seeing it, if you declined to continue with the Ceremony.

The Cable Tow placed around your neck was an emblem of the bondage which comes from ignorance, but together with the poignard which was presented to your naked left breast, also served to control your movements during the ceremony. You were divested of all metallic objects so that you could not bring any offensive weapons into the Lodge to disturb its harmony. The naked heel and the slipshod are because the ground is consecrated and the knee is bare so that there is nothing between it and the Earth when the Obligation is taken. The trouser leg is also rolled up to demonstrate the Candidate is a free man,

bearing no marks of a leg iron, but also so that when you kneel to make your solemn obligation, your knee is in contact with the consecrated ground. The Left Breast is made bare so that the points of both the poignard and the compasses can be felt next to the heart and also to prove that the Candidate is not female! It is appropriate that you entered the Lodge Room in a state of darkness, for it symbolised the gateway or beginning of life. You proceeded down the North side, a place of darkness. Your movements around the Lodge Room followed the path of the sun in the Northern Hemisphere, where our ceremonies originate. It rises in the East, reaches its highest point in the South then sets in the West and returns to the East through the hours of darkness.

After convincing the Brethren you were properly prepared to be made a Freemason, you made significant declarations about your honesty to the Craft. You declared that you offered yourself freely and voluntarily as a Candidate, that you wished to serve your fellow man and that, if you were admitted, you would adhere to the established customs of the Order.

You were then advanced to the pedestal by three steps, the beginning of your journey to the East, or light, in Freemasonry. You stepped off each time with the left foot, the left side traditionally symbolises evil. Each step with your left foot was symbolical of putting down evil. Each step being longer than the last represents the ratio 3:4:5, the lengths that form a perfect right-angle triangle and each representing your growing confidence.

Upon reaching the pedestal, you entered into an obligation of concealment. On your knees before all the assembled brethren, you vowed to hele and conceal what you might learn. Both words have the same meaning, namely, to cover over. The word 'hele' is derived from the Anglo-Saxon language used in England before the time of William the Conqueror. The word 'conceal' comes from the Norman French. Both words are used to ensure that the vow of secrecy was clearly understood.

You were made a Freemason in the body of a Lodge "just, perfect and regular". 'Just' because the Volume of the Sacred Law was open on the Master's pedestal; 'perfect' because there were seven or more regularly made Freemasons in attendance; and 'regular' because the Lodge has a Warrant from the United Grand Lodge of England, which gives authority to perform the ceremony.

After being restored to material light, you were informed of the three great though emblematical lights, or guides, in Freemasonry, the Volume of the Sacred Law, the Square and the Compasses. You received light at the pedestal facing East, symbolising birth and became a Brother among Masons. Having taken the great and solemn obligation of a Mason, you were entrusted with the Sign, Token and Word of an Entered Apprentice Freemason. A great deal happened to you during the ceremony and it would not be surprising if you have difficulty recollecting them. Do not let this concern you, for your Mentor will go through them again with you, before the next Lodge meeting.

You were invested with the badge of a Freemason, which is a simple white lambskin apron derived from the aprons worn by the ancient operative masons. It symbolises purity and innocence, white being the emblem of purity and the lamb being usually considered as the symbol of innocence. This badge is the basis of all Masonic aprons and it is adorned to show the progress a Brother has made in the Craft. The badge is more ancient than the Order of the Golden Fleece, which was established in 1430, or the Roman Eagle, which the early Romans carried at the head of a staff as an emblem of honour. It is more honourable than the Most Noble Order of the Garter founded in 1346, the highest order of knighthood in the world. Apart from signifying purity and innocence, the apron also denotes friendship. We are urged to use this symbol as a guide in our daily lives and never to disgrace the principles for which it stands.

You will remember being placed in the North East corner of the Lodge, body upright, feet in the form of a square. This is where you represented the foundation stone of a new building, the building of your new Masonic life. Be upright in life, deal with every man on the square and continue to look to the East for learning. On this foundation you were challenged, 'to raise a superstructure perfect in all its parts'. The North East corner has been well chosen for this foundation stone as it represents the point where you move from the North, the place of darkness and ignorance, to the East, the place of light and learning. Make learning a life-long ambition.

You were then challenged: "Have you anything to give"? but you were deliberately prevented from accepting the challenge. All valuables had been taken from you. It demonstrated that charity comes from the heart and is a way of life not just a payment. Your dress and absence of valuables must have made you ponder in what ways you can demonstrate charity. It was meant to be a constant reminder of your obligation to relieve the distress of indigent or needy Brethren. Charity may take the form of our time, our energy, our friendship or financial assistance. The practice of charity in its broadest sense is the foundation and springboard for other qualities in life.

The twenty-four inch gauge, the common gavel and the chisel are the Working Tools of an Entered Apprentice. They shape the rough stones of the future building. Symbolically, the twenty-four inch gauge teaches you how to use time; part in prayer to the Great Architect of the Universe; part in caring for your neighbour and part for yourself, particularly as it relates to your family, your work and your recreation. Your Masonic life is a symbolic rough stone that needs to be shaped for the intended structure.

The common gavel represents the voice of conscience, which is ever ready to warn us when we may tend to err. It reminds us with every knock to keep down all vain and unbecoming thoughts. The chisel points out the advantages of education and discipline. As the workman uses the chisel to give form to the shapeless mass of stone, so education transforms the ignorant person into a civilised being.

Talking about Freemasonry

What can I tell my family?

Freemasonry is not a Secret Society and there is very little of your experience as a Freemason which cannot be discussed with your family. It is a very good idea to share your experiences, so that family members understand what happens at a Lodge meeting and how you yourself participate in it. It is also important that those close to you, especially your wife or partner, if you have one, has a good understanding of what Freemasonry is and why you are prepared to devote some of your time and money to it. Remember, the friend in whom you confide may one day be interested in becoming a Freemason, so if possible, hold off on disclosing too much detail, as part of the enjoyment is the element of surprise when the blindfold is removed.

Can I tell my friends I am a Freemason?

You are encouraged to do so and hopefully it will be something of which you are very proud. There is no good reason for not letting your friends and colleagues know that you have become a Freemason and it is only natural that you will wish to tell them about those aspects of it which you find most enjoyable and intellectually rewarding.

Is there anything I cannot talk about?

The only things you must not disclose are the modes of recognition i.e. the Signs, Tokens and Words of the Degrees, because you have promised in your obligations not to do so. If pressed on the subject, you should advise that they are wholly symbolic and used as a means of recognition only within the confines of the Lodge Room.

There will of course be other things about which you cannot talk for lack of knowledge, not because they are secret in any way. When talking to family or friends, do not be afraid to admit that you are on a steep learning curve and that your understanding of Freemasonry is, as yet, far from complete. Tell them you will find out the answers they require before you next meet. A brief conversation with your Mentor will doubtless provide the necessary information to satisfy your friends whilst, at the same time, enhancing your own knowledge of Freemasonry. Most Lodges or Centres have open days, so invite your friends with difficult questions to come along and ask their questions of more experienced Masons.

What if I encounter bias?

Some of our detractors are biased through plain ignorance of the aims and objectives of Freemasonry. If you come across this, try asking the individual to keep an open mind and not be swayed by the misinformation and pure sensationalism that surfaces from time to time. Give them copies of the Grand Lodge booklets you yourself received before Initiation, invite them to a Lodge Open Day or to a Lodge social function. The number of both vociferous detractors and scurrilous articles published about Freemasonry has noticeably decreased in recent times, owing to the work of the Communications

Department of Grand Lodge that leaves no such matters unchallenged. Nevertheless, there are still detractors and you may well come across someone who has no intention of changing their preconceived opinion.

Can I visit other Lodges ?

Visiting is one of the most enjoyable parts of Freemasonry and, if invited, you should certainly accept if you are able to do so. It provides an opportunity to make new friends and see how other Lodges conduct their ceremonies. It is fair to say that no two Lodges are exactly alike!

Bear in mind that you will not be allowed into a Lodge delivering a ritual that you yourself have not received. Thus you should check which Degree is being worked prior to acceptance!

If you are in any doubt about the 'Regularity' of the Lodge to which you have been invited, you should ask your Lodge Secretary to confirm that it is 'recognised', something which is mandatory if the Lodge is located overseas. Whilst visiting is extremely enjoyable, you should not engage in it to the extent that it becomes detrimental to your family or working life. The same common-sense rule applies to every part of your Masonic activities.

Can I Invite Guests?

Definitely! When a visitor signs in stating that you are his host, you are vouching for his integrity as a Freemason. In doing so, you are indicating that you know him well, that he has fulfilled his dues and remains in membership of his own Lodge, and that he has not been excluded from the Craft for misconduct. On most occasions, visitors are Brethren who are well known to many members of the Lodge, but such is not always the case. When a guest is an acquaintance who is not attached to a specific Lodge, we must be more cautious. If you have any doubts as to the status or integrity of your guest, you should seek advice from your Mentor.

Why are there so many different aprons?

You will find a full explanation of the aprons in a document you will receive when you complete your Third Degree and become a Master Mason, but in brief:

- White signifies 'innocence', so the less white is shown the more experienced is the Mason wearing the apron.
- Light Blue signifies 'office, so anyone wearing a light blue apron is a Master Mason and probably an officer of a lodge and anyone wearing a light blue collar is an officer of the lodge you are attending.
- A thin dark blue border indicates experience, so those officers have been through the chair more than six years ago and have made significant contribution to Freemasonry during that time. These are Provincial or Metropolitan Grand Officers. Aprons with gold braid are used for 'special' meetings, the ones with plain dark blue borders are identical, but are less susceptible to damage.

- A red border indicates membership of a Steward's Lodge and these Brethren are usually excellent ritualists.
- A wide dark blue border indicates significant experience. These are Grand Officers.
- A wide dark blue border with work in the centre are probably members of the Provincial or Metropolitan Executive. These are Grand Officers who have held significant office.

Why do some people wear medals?

The correct term is 'jewel' rather than 'medal' and four types are frequently worn:

Past Masters' Jewels

It is customary in some Lodges to present the Worshipful Master with a Past Master's jewel at the end of his year in office to thank him for his work during the year. The design of jewel often incorporates the emblem of the Lodge.

Charity Festival Jewels

Individuals who subscribe certain amounts to a Charity Festival qualify as Stewards for that Festival. To mark this, they may wear the special Festival Jewel. Some of these jewels may only be worn for the duration of the Festival, whilst others receive permission from the Grand Master to be worn permanently.

Centenary Jewels

The Grand Master may grant the Lodge a Centenary Jewel when it reaches its 100th anniversary. This can be worn by Master Masons and above in the Lodge. For a Lodge which has reached its Bi Centenary (200 years), a bar is added to the ribbon of the Centenary Jewel.

Royal Arch Jewels

These are worn by Freemasons who have completed their three Craft Degrees and taken that next, most important, step on the path of Pure Antient Masonry, by joining an Order called the Royal Arch. They are expected to wear their Royal Arch Jewel when attending Lodge meetings. Whilst the design of the jewel stays the same, the colour of the ribbon changes depending upon the progress of the mason (known as a Companion) through the Order. It should be worn to the right of, and takes precedence over, all other jewels.

What's the purpose of the summons?

The Lodge Summons is just that. It summons members to the meetings and forewarns about; Ballots, Elections, Notices of Motion, Lodge Business and Risings.

These may be briefly explained:

Ballots

A ballot is held when there is a chance that a decision could be objected to such as a candidate or a joining member. This is when the 'black ball' could be used to exclude someone from membership. However, in reality any objections should have previously been raised at the Lodge GP meeting beforehand. In other instances a resolution (such as acceptance of minutes or an increase in subscriptions) may be passed by a show of hands.

Elections

An election is held for Master, Treasurer and Tyler. These elections must be held by ballot, although if there is only one candidate then the Brother may be 'Proclaimed' without ballot.

Notices of Motion

A notice of motion must be given of intention to xxx

Lodge Business

Risings

There are three risings during which the following points are discussed:

- Communications from UGLE,
- Communications from Provincial or Metropolitan Grand Lodge
- Local Lodge matters

Avoiding discussion on certain subjects such as politics and religion.

What support is available for Brethren and their families in distressed circumstances and what constitutes it.

Songs to be Sung in Meetings & Festive Board

Opening Ode

xxx

SO MOTE IT BE

Closing Ode

Xxx

SO MOTE IT BE

Masonic Grace

(To be sung)

For these and all Thy mercies given
We bless and praise Thy name O Lord
May we receive them with thanks-giving
Ever trusting in Thy Word
To Thee alone be honour, glory
Now and henceforth for evermore

Tyler's Toast

Brethren of the Mystic Tie,
the night is waning fast.
Our duty's done , our feast is O'er;
this song must be the last.
'Good night, Good Night.'
Once more, once more repeat the farewell strain;

'Happy to meet, sorry to part, happy to meet again! '

To all poor and distressed Freemasons,
Wherever they may be,
On the land, the sea or in the air.
Here's wishing them a speedy relief from their suffering,
and a safe return to their native land,
If they so desire.

'To all poor and distressed Freemasons.'