



PROVINCIAL
GRAND LODGE
of
NORFOLK

Start Your Journey as a Norfolk Freemason

*A Guide and Introduction
to Freemasonry in Norfolk*

www.norfolkfreemasons.org.uk



UNITED GRAND LODGE
OF ENGLAND

Introduction

We would like to thank you for expressing an interest in Freemasonry and for taking this booklet away with you.

The purpose of the booklet is to tell you a little more about who we are and what we do. It will also provide details as to what you should do if you would like any further information or would like to consider joining us.

A lot has been written about Freemasonry over the years and unfortunately, not all of it has been accurate. This booklet will try to answer some of the questions we are most commonly asked and will also attempt to put right some of the inaccuracies and myths you may have heard.

Starting with the first of these – we are not a secret society. While there are elements of what we do in our meetings that we keep private, mainly to try to keep them as a surprise for our candidates, the organisation itself is very open about what it is and what it does. We are very keen that you should also be very open about your interest and should discuss it freely, particularly with your family and friends.

You may well already know some Freemasons and they will be very happy to answer any questions and provide you with further information. If you are not aware of any Freemasons among your friends (you may be surprised after joining to find out just how many you do already know), we will provide contact details for people that will be able to help you further and put you in contact with those who manage Lodges in your area.

Our centres and Lodges also hold open days where the public are invited to come in and see our buildings and our Lodges hold occasional “White Table” meetings where family and friends join us at our meeting and dine with us afterwards. We also regularly attend large public gatherings such as the Royal Norfolk Show where members are available to talk to the public and answer their questions.



One of the Lodge Rooms at Gt. Yarmouth

The Province of Norfolk has around 3,000 members meeting in 75 Lodges at 23 different locations all across Norfolk.

There are a further two Lodges with a Norfolk Association that meet in London.

Our Lodges all meet on different days, most in the evening but we have four that meet during the day, so hopefully there will be one that works well for your location and schedule.

Lodges meeting during the day time are:

Old Norvicensian (Sat)

Morning Glory (Wed)

Sandringham (Thurs)

Admiral Lord Nelson (Tues)

Our current Provincial Grand Master is Right Worshipful Brother Stephen Norman Allen. He was Installed as Provincial Grand Master in October 2015.

What is Freemasonry?

Freemasonry is a happy association of friends which provides an interest, a discipline for life, many social activities for men and their families, and has a long history of charitable support to the less fortunate members of society. It has a fascinating history going back over three hundred years.

Freemasonry means different things to each of those who join. For some, it's about making new friends and acquaintances. For others it's about being able to help deserving causes – making a contribution to family and society. But for most, it is an enjoyable hobby.

Freemasonry is one of the world's oldest and largest non-religious, non-political, fraternal and charitable organisations. It teaches self-knowledge through participation in a progression of ceremonies.

Members are expected to be of high moral standing and are encouraged to speak openly about Freemasonry.

Freemasonry is a society of men concerned with moral and spiritual values.

Freemasonry instils in its members a moral and ethical approach to life: its values are based on integrity, kindness, honesty and fairness. Members are urged to regard the interests of family as paramount and importantly, Freemasonry also teaches concern for people, care for the less fortunate and help for those in need.

Freemasonry is open to men of good reputation, irrespective of race or creed, provided they believe in a Supreme Being. This belief is an essential qualification for admission and continued membership.

Freemasonry is emphatically not a religion. It requires a belief in God, and its principles are common to many of the world's great religions. Freemasonry does not try to replace religion or substitute for it. Every candidate is exhorted to practise his religion and to regard its holy book as the unerring standard of truth. Freemasonry does not instruct its members in what their religious beliefs should be.

Thus, Freemasonry brings men of different faiths together in a unique way, to share a happy and rewarding fellowship with one another.

Freemasonry teaches moral lessons and self-knowledge, through participation in a progression of two-part plays, which are learnt by heart and performed within each Lodge.

Freemasonry offers its members an approach to life which seeks to reinforce thoughtfulness for others, kindness in the community, honesty in business, courtesy in society, and fairness in all things. Members are urged to regard the interests of the family as paramount, but also teaches and practises concern for people, care for the less fortunate and help for those in need.

Freemasonry is not a secret society. Members are perfectly free to acknowledge their membership and should do so in answer to any reasonable enquiry. There is no secret about the aims and principles of the Order.

Lodge meetings, like meetings of any other social and professional associations, are private occasions open only to members. Freemasons are encouraged to be open about their membership and undertake not to use their membership for their own or anyone else's advancement.

Each candidate must state that he expects no material gain from his membership. Nor may Freemasonry ever be used to protect a fellow Freemason, or anyone else, who has behaved dishonestly or unlawfully.

A Short History of The Province

At a meeting held at the Angel Lodge, Norwich on 15th August 1758 and attended by the Masters and Wardens of the twelve Lodges then working in the City of Norwich, it was resolved 'that a Provincial Grand Master for this City, the County of Norfolk, and Beccles in Suffolk, would conduce to the benefit of Masonry in general and to the satisfaction of each Lodge in particular, and that our worthy Brother, Edward Bacon, Esq., is a proper person for that office'.

This recommendation resulted in a Patent dated 13th January 1759 appointing Edward Bacon of Earlham the first Provincial Grand Master of Norfolk. The first meeting of Provincial Grand Lodge took place on the 6th September 1759 at the Three Tuns, London Lane, Norwich.

Norfolk was among the earliest of the Provinces to call a Provincial Grand Lodge after Cheshire, Cornwall and Worcestershire.

Initially, Norfolk Provincial Grand Lodge resolved to meet quarterly on the first Friday after the Quarter Day. However, as the Minute Books of Provincial Grand Lodge do not exist prior to 1818, any details of their meetings can only be gleaned from the minutes Books of other Lodges, where they exist.

It is apparent that from 1818, the Provincial Grand Lodge met annually in Norwich until the appointment of Benjamin Bond Cabbell, who inaugurated the system whereby Provincial Grand Lodge would meet at the different towns in the county where Lodges met. This practice continued until 1962, when meetings reverted to being held in Norwich.

There are two special occasions in the history of the Province worthy of comment, both occurring in the late 19th Century. A distinguished honour was conferred on the Province by the attendance of the Grand Master, HRH the Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII) at the meeting of Provincial Grand Lodge held on 26th January 1885 at the Guildhall, King's Lynn. Two years later he attended the meeting of Provincial Grand Lodge at Great Yarmouth when the foundation stone of the new hospital was laid with full Masonic honours.



Edward Bacon M.P., the first Provincial Grand Master



RW Bro. Stephen Norman Allen, the current Provincial Grand Master

*The oldest Lodge still working in the Province is **Union Lodge No. 52**, Constituted on 24th June 1736. Union Lodge meets at Norwich.*

*Our newest Lodge is **Scout Lodge No. 9850**, Consecrated on 14th November 2009. Scout Lodge is a travelling Lodge and holds its meetings at Diss, Wroxham, Sheringham and Great Yarmouth.*

At the time of the formation of the Provincial Grand Lodge there were 16 Lodges working in Norfolk, today there are 75.

What Does it Do?



Charity

In addition to the contributions made by individual Lodges to local good causes, the Province of Norfolk has given sizeable donations and grants for equipment to several charities including:

University of East Anglia to support prostate cancer and Covid-19 research

Sea Palling lifeboat with a Mobile Welfare Unit

Norfolk Scrubs Volunteers to purchase fabric

Norfolk Family Carers and NANSAs to cover shortfalls in funding ensuring support could continue

Human Milk Foundation with a donor breast milk hub

Production, distribution and purchase of face shields including at the James Paget Hospital

Citizens Advice Bureau with IT equipment to facilitate an increase in calls

Norfolk Blood Bikes

Freemasonry is founded on a number of principles. Through re-inforcing these principles in our ceremonies and behaviours, we strive to make good men into better men. One of our core principles is charity, and fund raising is very important to us.

From its earliest days, Freemasonry has been concerned with the care of orphans, the sick and the aged. This work continues today. In addition, large sums are given to national and local charities.

Masonic charity is exercised at every level: individual Lodges make gifts and give aid to their own communities and every Province also gives large sums of money to regional causes.

Freemasonry raises all of its donations from within its own membership supported by their families and friends. This is achieved both at our meetings and through social events and sponsorship challenges arranged by both our Lodges and the Province. We do not run external campaigns and we do not collect money publicly. Many of our members give regularly by standing order and we all contribute at every meeting we attend, both to an alms collection and often to a raffle. Most Lodges during the course of a year will hold social functions, again with the aim of raising funds for charity whilst at the same time enjoying ourselves to the full! It is important to note that the large sums we raise are generated by our many members each giving small amounts, there is no expectation that any member will contribute more than this.

Nationally, our efforts are channelled through our main charity: The Masonic Charitable Foundation

The MCF provides national and international support across a huge range of areas and also fund key medical research into areas such as dementia and cancer. It also ensures that our members and their dependants are supported should they encounter any significant problems in their lives.

In addition, we support local charities and good causes in our own communities, with each Lodge donating to their own selected causes. These range from providing fuel for paramedic first responders to supporting local scout groups with their needs.

The Province also has its own charity fund – *The Norfolk Freemasons Charitable Fund* which can provide support across the Province where this would over burden any individual Lodge.



How do I Join?

If you would like to become a Freemason, there is a membership process to go through. The first thing you should do is talk to people, either your own friends who are already Masons, or to the Provincial Membership Officer – his contact details are on the back page of this booklet.

He will talk you through some of the options available to you, such as Lodges and meeting dates and will aim to find out whether Freemasonry is right for you (we don't want to bring you into something you are not ready for or won't enjoy).

There is a membership form which you will complete. This form is then counter signed by two existing Masons in the Lodge you are to join, known as your Proposer and Seconder. They will have a key role in helping and supporting you through your early years of membership.

You will be interviewed by a committee of Lodge members to ensure that you have all the information you need and again, to check that you are ready for membership. They will check that you are aware of the financial commitments, the amount of your time your membership will require, and very importantly, that your partner and family are aware of and happy with your application. Whilst our institution is made up solely of men, our values are built very much around family. We want to be sure they fully support you joining us and point out some of the many areas of your membership that they will be welcome to join in.

Your membership must be voted for by every member of the Lodge, and there must be near unanimous approval for you to be admitted. Following this approval you will be informed of the likely dates for your joining. Please be aware that for some Lodges completing the process for membership may take over a year. However, during that time you will be invited to, and encouraged to attend all of the Lodge's social activities.



An Introduction to Freemasonry Evening at 47 St. Giles Street, Norwich



Respect

With grants totalling over £8 million each year, the Masonic Charitable Foundation helps thousands of disadvantaged and vulnerable people to live happy, fulfilling lives and participate actively in society.

The MCF's work is funded solely through the generous donations of Freemasons, their families and friends.

Our current target areas include:

Creating the best start in life for disadvantaged children and young people, reducing isolation in later life, medical research into degenerative disease and care services in the hospice sector

In May 2019 our Provincial Grand Master presented a cheque for £190,213 for the Tiger Test Appeal. This was supplemented by a further £100,000 from The MCF. This provided a state-of-the-art scanner which will drive the accurate identification of aggressive prostate cancers avoiding the unnecessary treatment of non-aggressive cancers.

What Happens Next?



Having completed the membership process, the day will finally arrive for the First Degree Ceremony – your Initiation into Freemasonry.

This takes the form of a play, performed by the members of the Lodge (and which they will have worked hard to learn by heart).

You will need to ensure that you arrive at the Masonic Centre promptly at the time agreed, From the moment you arrive there will be somebody with you to look after you, support you and to explain elements of what is going to take place.

You should wear a black or dark suit (avoiding tight-legged trousers), with a long sleeved white shirt and black neck tie. You should also wear black shoes and black socks.

Elements of the ceremony are going to seem a little strange, you will have heard all the talk of rolled-up trouser legs and the like. The ceremony goes back over 300 years and as a result, parts can seem a little strange in the context of our modern life. However, everything that happens in the ceremony from start to finish is done for a specific reason, to reinforce the principles and morality required of you as a member. Some of the symbolism will be explained during the ceremony, but some won't. One of the nice things about masonic ritual is that if you are interested in it, there is always something new to explore and research.

Very importantly, every person in the Lodge room during the ceremony, from the most senior to the most junior, has been through exactly the same ceremony themselves. They are all keen that your ceremony will be done as well as possible and be as special for you as theirs was for them.

Following the ceremony, you will join your brethren for the Festive Board, the formal dinner that follows a meeting. These are always a very enjoyable occasion and provide an opportunity to talk to and meet the brethren of your Lodge and the visitors who have come along for your special evening. Following dinner, there are a series of formal toasts. On the occasion of your Initiation, one of these will be made to you. You will be required to make a very short reply to this toast which your proposer and seconder will help you to prepare.

Following your Initiation, you have a further two ceremonies to go through to complete your membership and bring you to the rank of Master Mason. Depending on your Lodge, the three ceremonies may take 1 – 2 years to complete.

Freemason's Lodges are held in most countries in the World.

As a Master Mason you will be permitted to visit Lodges in other countries. You must however check via your Lodge

Secretary that the Grand Lodge of the country you are visiting is affiliated to and accepted by the Grand Lodge of England, as some do not conform to the same strict standards we apply to ourselves.

Your Secretary, assisted by the Provincial Office, may be able to arrange an introduction for you to Lodges in the area you will be visiting.

The same rules apply to brethren from other countries that you may wish to invite to your own meetings. They will be very welcome, but you must check before inviting them with the Lodge Secretary that their membership is with English masonry. Remember, a Lodge is a room full of friends you have not met yet!



Provincial Grand Lodge

The Onward Journey

Having completed your three degree ceremonies, you will reach the rank of Master Mason. This is the point where your masonic world will really begin to open up. You will be issued with your Grand Lodge Certificate which is a proof of your membership and will enable you to visit Lodges where you are not known.

You will also (should you wish to) have the opportunity to start taking part in the administration and management of the Lodge and to take an active part in the ceremonies.

Our ceremonies are performed by a series of officers – Inner Guard, Junior Deacon, Senior Deacon, Junior Warden, Senior Warden and the Worshipful Master. These offices are generally progressive – you move up to the next office annually until you become the Worshipful Master. There are also other officers who assist in the ceremonies and look after the administration of the Lodge such as the Secretary, the Director of Ceremonies, the Almoner and the Charity Steward. Some of these offices are usually filled by brethren after they have served as Worshipful Master. Others, you may get an opportunity to take on earlier should you wish.

It is also important to note that taking on any office is entirely your own choice. There are many brethren who simply like to turn up and enjoy the meetings and the Festive Board without wishing to actively take part in performing them. This is an entirely acceptable choice, everybody's personal journey through Freemasonry is different and yours should be built to suit your wishes, skills and ambitions.

If you do decide to take an active part (and we hope you will), you will find help, support and training available to you right the way through.

As a Master Mason, you will also be able to attend the annual meeting of Provincial Grand Lodge. It is a wonderful day out and your support to the brethren receiving Provincial honours is always hugely appreciated. It is always a very spectacular event, where you will also get the opportunity to meet brethren from every Lodge in our Province, also visiting brethren from other Provinces.

Within the Province there are a series of internal clubs for brethren sharing similar interests. These include a Garden Club and a Golfing Association

We also have Lodges formed around specific topics, backgrounds and even schools. These include:

Naval & Military Lodge

Norfolk Royal Air Force Lodge

Scout Lodge

Lodge of Marksmen

Old Pastonian Lodge

Old Norvicensian Lodge

Lion Lodge

Norfolk Farmers Lodge

Rotary Lodge of Norfolk

Round Table Lodge of Norfolk

Lodge of Service & Integrity

Can I involve my Family?

Freemasonry does have one element that can be considered as perhaps a little strange. Whilst its membership is made up entirely of men, it is founded on the principles of family.

Whilst your family cannot join you at our regular meetings (unless they are also Freemasons) there are many occasions during the year when they are extremely welcome to join us at many other activities that take place during the year.

You should be very open with your family about your membership and what that membership teaches you and brings to you personally. The only thing that shouldn't be openly discussed is the content of our ceremonies. As mentioned earlier, this is solely to ensure that they remain a surprise for future candidates.

Many Lodges put on a range of social events each year, ranging from White Table evenings where family and friends are invited to join us in the Lodge Room for part of our meeting followed by dining with us at our Festive Board.

There are also many other events, ranging from Lodge Ladies' Nights – a formal dinner dance put together to thank our ladies for all they do for us, to events put together by the Province specifically for celebrating with our families and friends.

Whilst the Lodge you choose to join will probably have its own events during the course of the year, you will also be very welcome at any other Lodge's events. Having joined, your network of friends in other Lodges will grow and will open up the opportunities for you to enjoy your membership to the full and share it with your family.



Provincial Grand Lodge Ball



Freemasons' Hall is the headquarters of the United Grand Lodge of England and the principal meeting place for Masonic Lodges in London. It is located on Great Queen Street in Covent Garden.

Grand Lodge has been in Great Queen Street since 1775, the present Hall being the third building on the site.

Built between 1927–1932 as a memorial to the Freemasons who died in the First World War, it is one of the finest Art Deco buildings in England, and is now Grade II listed internally and externally. In addition to the Grand Temple (seating 1,700) there are 21 Lodge Rooms, the Library & Museum of Freemasonry, Board and Committee Rooms and administrative offices.

The building is fully open to the public and free tours are available most weekdays

Frequently Asked Questions

What will it cost?

Costs will vary from Lodge to Lodge, but generally each member pays an annual subscription equivalent to between £5 and £10 per week (including dining costs) paid monthly or annually, depending on where the Lodge meets and how often. This includes a fee to both Grand Lodge and Provincial Grand Lodge to cover administration.

The subscription will depend on the running costs of the centre it meets in and the number of Lodges and members contributing to it. There is also a one-off Initiation fee when you join. Your contact at the Lodge you wish to join will be able to give you full details of their fees.

At each meeting there is a collection for charity and usually a raffle. This is accounted for in the £5 to £10 per week. Your contribution to these is entirely your own concern, nobody will dictate how much you should give. All we do ask is that you should never give any more than you can comfortably afford to do.

Are there any qualifications for membership?

You must be male and should usually be at least 18 (there is no upper age limit). You must have a belief in a Supreme Being, there is no form of distinction or preference as to which religion you follow, or whether you attend a church regularly. You must not have a criminal record (minor traffic offences can be excepted, but should be mentioned in your application/interview). Most offences would be deemed time served.

You must not join seeking to gain financial or business benefit.

How much time does it take?

Each Lodge has a different schedule of meetings. Most meet between four and ten times per year. Many Lodges also hold a School of Instruction, where the ritual is taught and rehearsed in a less formal atmosphere. Some of these meet weekly. Attendance at a School of Instruction is not compulsory although if you are in an office that requires you to take part in a ceremony your attendance may be requested. The School of Instruction provides an excellent opportunity to get to know the members of your Lodge better and to ask questions about Freemasonry more generally.

Places in Norfolk where Lodges meet:

Attleborough

Aylsham

Dereham

Diss

Downham Market

Drayton

Fakenham

Great Yarmouth

Harleston

Heacham

Horning

King's Lynn

Mundesley

North Walsham

Norwich

Sheringham

Swaffham

Thetford

Watton

Wells

Wroxham

Wymondham