



The Masonic Province of West Kent



INTERVIEWING THE CANDIDATE

A GUIDE

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Interviewing the Candidate – A Guide

1. INTRODUCTION

In his address to Grand Lodge in March 2007, the Pro Grand Master stressed the need to voice the objectives and merits of our Order openly to new members at the very beginning of their Masonic career, that is from the moment when a potential candidate is first interviewed. It is also vitally important to ensure that the potential candidate for Freemasonry is thoroughly vetted before he is formally proposed in open Lodge so that any doubts as to his suitability for Freemasonry, or equally important, any doubts that he may have about the suitability of Freemasonry for him, should be resolved before any ballot is taken.

The interview should therefore be a two way process, informing the candidate what he can expect from Freemasonry and what Freemasonry will expect from him.

2. Responsibility of the Proposer and Secunder

Initial vetting of a candidate is the responsibility of the Proposer and Secunder. It is their responsibility to ensure that, in their opinion, their candidate will be a valuable addition to the Lodge. The Proposer and Secunder should complete and return Registration Form P.

3. Invitation to Interview

After the potential candidate, his Proposer and Secunder have completed and returned Registration Form P, the Lodge Secretary should write to the candidate inviting him to attend an interview. The letter should detail where, when and also why the interview is to take place. The letter should also include information on the basic principles of Freemasonry to ensure that the candidate has some knowledge of the organisation that he wishes to join before he attends an interview.

A draft invitation letter is at **ANNEX A** and an information leaflet is at **ANNEX B**.

4. The Interview

The final vetting of a candidate is usually done by an Interviewing Committee or the General Purposes Committee of a Lodge and chaired by the Master. The way in which a Lodge prepares its candidates and conducts its interviews is of course a matter for the Lodge itself, what follows is a recommended procedure for the guidance of Lodges. The interview should be conducted in a friendly but formal way, and its members should decide beforehand who is to conduct which areas of questioning. By the end of the interview, the committee should be in no doubt as to his suitability or otherwise, and likewise the candidate should be left in no doubt of what is expected of him should he become a member of the Lodge and be quite sure that he wants to join that Lodge.

5. Interview Procedure

When the Committee is assembled and before the Candidate is admitted, the Application Form should be read by the Secretary and the Proposer and Secunder invited to state the case for the Applicant.

The case having been made, the candidate may be admitted and given a seat and introduced to the members by the Master.

Good interview techniques are essential, allowing information to be elicited in a friendly and informal manner. Always remember that if the potential candidate is relaxed, you are more likely to be seeing the real man. A defensive interviewee may try to hide his true self.

The Worshipful Master should address him along the following lines:-

" Mr....., this is a meeting of the.....Lodge General Purposes Committee whose duty it is to interview all candidates for admission to membership of this Lodge, and explain to them the duties and responsibilities they will have to undertake if initiated into Freemasonry.

Some of the questions may appear very personal, but they should be accepted and answered in the spirit in which they are put. The object is to ensure, so far as is possible, that every candidate admitted into Freemasonry will be a worthy member who will carry out his duties and responsibilities to the best of his abilities.

Also, it gives an opportunity for you to enquire and to clear up any doubts or misgivings that you may have that may prevent you from joining our Fraternity because of mistaken ideas as to its objectives.

Please be assured that your replies will be treated in strict confidence by this Committee and you yourself are expected to regard this meeting with the same confidence."

6. Questions for the Candidate

Questions to the candidate should establish –

- If he believes in a Supreme Being.
- That his moral and mental standards are satisfactory.
- His membership will ultimately bring credit upon his Lodge.
- Having advised him of the subscription and other costs, that his acceptance will create no financial or domestic problems.
- Having explained the frequency of Lodge Meetings, Lodges of Instruction/ Rehearsals, that will he be prepared for the time commitment that membership might involve.
- Will he be prepared to support the charitable aims of the Order provided it is without detriment to his family and connections.
- His motives for joining Freemasonry; in particular it is necessary to be satisfied that he is not seeking to become a Freemason because he expects that membership will advance him in his business, or provide him with a material gain or preference.
- His wife's/partner's views on Freemasonry and his proposed membership of the Order.
- If he will participate in the social activities of the Lodge and if his wife/partner are aware that there are such opportunities to be involved.

The choice and wording of questions is of course a matter for each individual Lodge, but a selection is given at **ANNEX C**

It is recommended that at the conclusion of the questions and in the light of the information that he has been given, the candidate should be asked if he wishes to continue with his application for admission or whether he would wish to withdraw.

7. THE DECISION

The candidate, his Proposer and Seconder should be asked to withdraw while the Committee discuss the Application. If the Committee consider him suitable, he should be invited back into the room and told that the Committee have decided to recommend his application, and also what he can expect from Freemasonry.

The following is an indication of what might be considered suitable:-

Mr....., we have been truly delighted to see you here this evening and I am happy to tell you that this Committee has unanimously decided to recommend your application to the Lodge. At the next regular Lodge meeting, a ballot of all members will held and, if you are successful you will be accepted for Initiation at a subsequent meeting.

New candidates for Freemasonry are the most important people in our fraternity, because without them our organisation cannot renew itself. So please be assured that we take your application very seriously. If you are successful in the ballot, we can promise you that Freemasonry has the potential to enrich your life in a very wide variety of ways. That includes being part of something greater than yourself, the opportunity to make a difference through our charity work, firm and supportive friendships with people you might otherwise never have met, self-improvement and regular progression through the various offices of the lodge to the point where you would be its Master, to name but a few. You would find that whatever you put into Freemasonry, you would get it back double. So you see, your being here tonight is a really exciting development for all of us. Thank you so much for your time.

If the ballot in open Lodge is successful, a letter should be sent to the candidate by the Secretary welcoming him and advising him of the date, time and place to be in attendance, details of dress to be worn as well as details of costs etc.

A draft letter is at **ANNEX D**

Note: Grand Lodge recommend that to avoid any possible embarrassment, the ballot should not be taken at the meeting at which the candidate is to be initiated.

Should the Committee consider him unsuitable, the candidate should be invited back into the room and the Chairman should thank him for attending and explain as courteously as possible that he would most probably be not happy in the Lodge and find membership uncongenial. A detailed explanation should be given to the Proposer and Seconder.

LETTER of INVITATION

Dear Mr.....

Thank you for your application for membership of our Lodge. You Proposer will have explained to you that you will be invited to attend a meeting of the Lodge General Purposes Committee. This meeting will be held at *(place)* on *(date)* at *(time)*.

The purpose of the meeting will be twofold, firstly so that we can get to know you and secondly to give you the opportunity to pose any questions that you may have about Freemasonry or about our Lodge. If the Committee find in your favour, your application will be put to the full Lodge membership and, if approved, you will be admitted to the Lodge in due course.

The enclosed booklet will give you some background information about Freemasonry and our activities. If there is anything on which you require clarification before the Committee meeting, I suggest that you ask your Proposer or Seconder.

Should the above date be inconvenient for our meeting, I would be most grateful if you could inform me as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

Lodge Secretary

INFORMATION FOR THE CANDIDATE

INTRODUCTION

Now that you have expressed a wish to become a Freemason, it is appropriate to give you some more information on the background to the Craft. We hope that you will find the following interesting and of use. There is a great deal to learn about Freemasonry and many find a lifetime is all too short, but hopefully as time goes by you will come to appreciate how much it has to offer.

WHAT IS FREEMASONRY?

Freemasonry is one of the world's oldest secular fraternities. It is a society of men concerned with moral and spiritual values whose members are taught its precepts by a series of ritual dramas which follow ancient forms, and it uses stonemasons' customs and tools as allegorical guides. It has over 300,000 members within England and Wales making up nearly 8,000 Lodges which makes it the largest fraternal organisation in the United Kingdom, and there are a further 30,000 members overseas. It is unknown precisely how long Freemasonry has been in existence. However our earliest records detail one Elias Ashmole who was made a Mason in England in 1646; these ancient records show that Freemasonry has been existence for at least three hundred and fifty years.

THE THREE GREAT PRINCIPLES

Freemasonry offers its members an approach to life, which seeks to reinforce:

- **Brotherly Love** - Every true Freemason will show tolerance and respect for the opinions of others and behave with kindness and understanding to his fellow creatures.
- **Relief** - Freemasons are taught to practice charity and to care, not only for their own, but also for the community as a whole, both by charitable giving, and by voluntary efforts and works as individuals.
- **Truth** - Freemasons strive for truth and honesty, requiring high moral standards and aiming to achieve them in their own lives.

THE LODGE

The Lodge provides the foundations to Freemasonry. A typical Lodge will have between thirty and forty members and will meet four or five times a year. A Master who is elected annually governs each Lodge, there are also other Lodge officers including two Wardens, a Secretary, Treasurer and Almoner.

The long history of Freemasonry becomes apparent when looking at some of the local Lodges. The Union of Waterloo Lodge No.13, which meets in Dartford, was founded in 1761 and the Saint John and Saint Paul Lodge which meets at Welling was founded in 1853 and they have both met regularly ever since. However most Lodges have been formed more recently. During its evolution a Lodge constructs its own traditions and ways, of which its members become proud and there is often a spirit of friendly rivalry between neighbouring Lodges. Most masons belong to only one Lodge.

WHAT HAPPENS AT A LODGE MEETING

Lodge meetings are usually held in the evenings; starting times vary depending on the Lodge and the length of the agenda, but are generally around 5 o'clock. Meetings are attended by the Lodge members and often by guests from other Lodges. Like most meetings, they include the minutes of the previous meeting, apologies for absence and financial reports from the Treasurer. They also include ceremonies for the introduction or progression of a new member or a talk on some aspect of Masonic life perhaps its history or policy. Normally the Charity Steward and the social event organiser will give accounts of activities that have taken place or ones that are planned. The Almoner will report on the sick and aged members of the Lodge, the widows and families of Lodge members and of any help that they may need. Other matters are also discussed such as the Lodge's charitable activities. Most Lodges conclude their meetings by singing the National Anthem.

Dinner will follow the meeting concluding with the loyal toast to the Queen, and if it has not been sung during the meeting, the National Anthem. The whole evening will occupy four or five hours, finishing around half past nine.

INTERVIEW

Every candidate for Freemasonry is interviewed by the senior members of the Lodge that he has applied to join. This gives the Lodge the opportunity to meet you and learn something about you, and gives you the opportunity for you to ask questions to determine if Freemasonry is for you.

If the Committee decides to recommend your application for membership, then your application will be balloted by the full Lodge.

DRESS AT A LODGE MEETING

It is customary that at Lodge meetings for members and visitors to wear a dark suit, white shirt and black tie, black shoes and socks, and white gloves.

DEGREES IN FREEMASONRY

There are three degrees in Freemasonry, new members join as Entered Apprentices, progress to Fellow Crafts and then become full Master Masons, a process which can take 12 to 18 months. Each degree has a different theme and progress from one degree to the next involves a ceremony in which the objects of the degree are explained to the candidate. However, whether he be an Entered Apprentice, a Fellow Craft or a Master Mason, the Brother is a full member of the Lodge

REGALIA

Masonic regalia consists basically of an apron, a symbol of the working mason who wore an apron to protect his clothing; the design of a Brother's apron indicates his degree, a Master Mason's apron being more elaborate than an Entered Apprentice's. You will be required to purchase your own Master Mason's apron, but the Lodge will provide an Entered Apprentice's apron and a Fellow Craft's apron for your use. Office holders in the Lodge and some senior Brethren also wear collars. Brethren appointed to Provincial Grand Lodge office or to Grand Lodge Office wear more elaborate aprons and collars.

YOUR MENTOR

When the ceremony of your initiation is complete, you will be introduced to your Mentor. An experienced Mason, his role will be to be your guide leader and coach through the first years of your Masonic career. He will be there to give advice and explain to you the workings, tradition and organisation of the institution, making your introduction to Freemasonry as smooth, easy and pleasurable as possible.

LODGE OF INSTRUCTION

In order to progress in Masonry, it is necessary to devote a certain amount of time to study and become proficient in the ritual used in the ceremonies. Most Lodges hold fortnightly meetings for instruction in the ceremonies, these meetings are called Lodges of Instruction. They are very informal, you are not expected to wear a dark suit etc and there is no dinner. They generally end up with a beer in the bar and this is an excellent opportunity for members of the Lodge to get to know each other better.

COST OF MEMBERSHIP

Costs vary from Lodge to Lodge. There is normally a Joining Fee of typically £100 while membership dues amount to about £180 per year though this will normally include the meals following the four or five meetings each year. In addition and a Brother is required to purchase his own regalia costing about £35 for a Master Mason. In addition, members are also expected to give what they can afford to charity, but not more!

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

Lodges encourage wives and families to see themselves as part of the Masonic family, and draw that family together. Many Lodges hold a meeting each year to which families and friends are invited. In addition, some Lodges host an annual "Ladies Evening" Dinner or Dinner and Dance or a weekend away, and Lodge Family Lunches have become increasingly popular. Should a member die, his widow and family are not forgotten but continue to be part of the family and the Lodge does its best to offer support through the Almoner. Widows are invited to the Lodge's family events and are always remembered at Christmas.

THE PROVINCE OF WEST KENT

Lodges are grouped into Provinces, which usually correspond geographically to the ancient counties. The county of Kent originally formed a single Province but because of the large number of Lodges within it, it was split into two in 1973, East Kent and West Kent

The Province of West Kent covers an area of approximately 180 square miles. It stretches from the River Thames at Erith in the North to Tunbridge Wells in the South, and reaches from Gravesend to Beckenham and Bromley. Within the Province of West Kent there are nearly 200 Lodges meeting in nine Masonic centres and about 6,000 members.

Each Province is headed by a Provincial Grand Master who is assisted by a team of Provincial Grand Officers. The Provincial Grand Master presides over the Provincial Grand Lodge meetings, which take place at least once a year, and are open to all Master Masons belonging to Lodges meeting within that Province. The Provincial Grand Master of West Kent is currently Right Worshipful Brother Jonathan Winpenny.

FREEMASONRY IN KENT

The history of Freemasonry in Kent is long and honourable. Records show of the first Lodge in Kent being formed in April 1730; it met in the Red Lion Tavern in Canterbury, but sadly did not last for long. In those days meetings were informal and most Lodges met in Inns and Taverns, as this was all that was available. The first Provincial Grand Master was the Honourable Robert Boyle Walsingham who was installed in 1769. The following years saw the foundation of many more Lodges in the area, but the hard times following the Napoleonic wars saw many of them disbanded. However when the Viscount Holmsdale (later Earl Amhurst), became the Provincial Grand Master in 1860 a new life was given to Freemasonry within Kent and by the beginning of the 20th Century there were 66 Lodges in the Province. Lodge meetings continued to take place during the First World War but were much disturbed by the Zeppelin attacks. Throughout the Second World War, meetings took place as best they could, sometimes in members homes or even whilst air raids were taking place.

THE UNITED GRAND LODGE OF ENGLAND

The governing body of Freemasonry under the English Constitution is "The United Grand Lodge of Ancient Free and Accepted Masons of England" or more generally "Grand Lodge" and this is a title that has been used since 1717. Grand Lodge has its administrative offices at Freemason's Hall, Great Queen Street, London and meets every three months; these meetings are referred to as "Quarterly Communications". The Grand Master, HRH the Duke of Kent presides over these meetings whenever he is able but in his absence his place is taken by the Pro Grand Master, the Marquis of Northampton. Masters and Past Masters of every Lodge under the English Constitution are entitled to attend and vote on matters raised.

MASONIC CHARITIES

Charity is one of the priorities of Freemasonry and its members are encouraged to give what they can reasonably afford - but no more! Masons do not raise money from the general public, contributions are raised from the members themselves and are given for the benefit of those less fortunate, both masons and non-masons and their families.

Masonic giving takes place on three levels:- most Lodges support their local charities such as Hospices etc; Provinces support larger charities in the area while the Grand Lodge supports national charities.

Grand Lodge charity is administered by four bodies:

1. THE GRAND CHARITY

The Grand Charity was set up to respond quickly to urgent needs such as natural disasters. It helps individuals and many charities. Recently the Grand Charity donated £2.1m to Masonic causes and £2.9m to non-Masonic causes within one year.

2. THE ROYAL MASONIC BENEVOLENT INSTITUTION

The Masonic Order maintains 19 Old Peoples Homes, which look after some 2,000 old people. Prince George Duke of Kent Court at Chislehurst is the nearest. Some of the homes are specially equipped to care for those with mental or physical illnesses and are tailored to meet people's needs. Additionally the Institution pays annuities to elderly Masons and widows who have fallen on hard times.

3. THE MASONIC TRUST FOR GIRLS AND BOYS

The educational needs of over 1500 orphaned children or grandchildren of Freemasons are looked after by the Masonic Trust for Girls and Boys. The trust has recently launched a major new initiative to provide educational equipment - especially computers - to the specialist hospices for children in England and Wales. It also supplies grants for students.

4. THE SAMARITAN FUND

The Samaritan Fund supports the needy, sick and infirm Freemasons and their families, particularly where they cannot obtain treatment from the National Health Service without undue delay or hardship.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:-

IS FREEMASONRY A SECRET SOCIETY?

Freemasonry is emphatically not a secret society, but in common with many other organisations, its meetings are private and, as might be expected, only open to members. The rules and aims of Freemasonry are readily available, as are details of every Masonic Lodge and the names of all senior members of the organisation. The locations and addresses of all Masonic centres are given in telephone directories. Many centres hold open days where the public is invited to visit and see for themselves the aims and objectives of Freemasonry. The Freemasons Hall in Great Queen Street, London is open to the public and guided tours take place regularly.

WHAT THEN ARE THE SECRETS OF FREEMASONRY?

The so-called secrets of Freemasonry are the traditional ways of recognition. The signs in the past enabled a complete stranger to arrive at a building site and at once establish his status as a craftsman. Those signs were a sort of PIN and as such were closely guarded.

IS FREEMASONRY A SUBSTITUTE RELIGION?

Although Freemasonry requires a belief in a Supreme Being, it does not in any way try to either replace religion or act as a substitute for it. While it demands a belief in a Supreme Being, every member is encouraged to practice his own religion. Freemasonry is complementary to and supportive of religion, allowing all cultures and creeds to meet in harmony and understanding.

WHY "THE GREAT ARCHITECT OF THE UNIVERSE"?

Freemasonry embraces all men of goodwill who believe in a Supreme Being and its members follow many faiths. Referring to God as "the Great Architect of the Universe" permits men of different religions to meet together without giving offence to any of them or their faith.

WHO CAN JOIN?

Membership is open to men of all faiths and all races providing they are of good repute, honest, law-abiding and acknowledge a conviction that there is a Supreme Being to whom we are all ultimately accountable. However, it is unlikely that anyone with a criminal record would be considered for membership.

MASONIC PREFERENCE

Freemasons are certainly not expected to prefer fellow Masons at the expense of others. Such an action would be a fundamental abuse of membership and would be subject to Masonic discipline, possibly expulsion. A man who becomes a mason must expect no material gain.

WHY JUST MEN?

One could just as easily ask why the Women's Institute is only for women. In fact there are four organizations in the UK calling themselves 'Masonic Orders'. Two of these are exclusively for women, one is mixed and our own (admittedly much the largest) which is exclusively for men.

AND IN CONCLUSION

We hope that you will have found this interesting, and that it will increase your understanding of the Fraternity that you have applied to join. If you have any further questions, ask either your Proposer or Secunder.

You may wish to show this information to your partner - please feel free to do so.

ANNEX C

QUESTIONS TO THE CANDIDATE

1. Do you have a sincere belief in the existence of a Supreme Being?

Note;-

- a. This question must be put and preferably should be put by the Master.
- b. If the answer is "Yes" then the interview should continue.

If the answer is "No" then it should be gently explained that to one who has no belief in a Supreme Being the rites and ceremonies of Freemasonry would be meaningless and participation in them would be hypocritical; the applicant should be politely thanked for coming and the interview terminated.

Assuming the candidate has answered "Yes" to the above question, then some or all of the following questions should be put by members of the Committee.

2. Would your wife or partner be supportive if you joined our Lodge and does she know that you have come for an interview this evening?
3. Have you told your wife/partner of your wish to join Freemasonry, does she approve and will she support you if you become a member?
4. Would she be supportive of our social functions?
5. At our meetings, we sing the National Anthem and drink to the health of Her Majesty, are you happy to do so?
6. What do you know about Freemasonry?
7. Why do you wish to become a Freemason?
8. Have you ever made a previous attempt to join Freemasonry?
9. What qualities do you think that you can bring to Freemasonry?
10. Do you expect to derive any pecuniary or other benefits from Freemasonry?

ANNEX C

QUESTIONS TO THE CANDIDATE

11. Are you prepared to take a solemn obligation on the Bible, or on your own sacred Book? If not on the Bible, on which sacred Book?
12. I have to ask you this, have you ever been in trouble with the Law, minor offences such as parking etc excepted?
13. Formal meetings of this Lodge are held on and normally commence at and are followed by dinner, would you be able to attend these meetings?
14. It is obligatory that at our meetings, you wear a dark suit, white shirt and black tie, black shoes and socks, and white gloves. Are you willing to do so?
15. In order to progress in Masonry, you need to devote a certain amount of time to study; would you be willing and able to do so?
16. Would you be willing to attend weekly/fortnightly informal meetings for instruction?
17. Currently, the costs of being a member of this Lodge are:-
Initiation Fee £.....
Annual Subscription £..... (this includes the cost of your dinner following the formal meetings of the Lodge). You will also have to provide your own regalia, a set of new regalia costs about £35.
Are you willing to meet these costs?
18. You may invite Masonic Brethren from other Lodges as your guest to our Lodge meetings, in which case you will be responsible for their dining costs which are currently about £.....depending on the meal provided.
Are you willing to meet these costs?
19. Freemasonry is not a form of Life Assurance, have you made provision for your family?

QUESTIONS TO THE CANDIDATE

20. Each year, the Worshipful Master will nominate a number of public and private charities and encourage members to support them. In order to support them a collection is made at each formal meeting to which you are expected to contribute, giving what you feel your circumstances will allow. Is this acceptable to you?
21. In addition from time to time the Provincial Grand Master sponsors a fund raising festival on behalf of one of the major Masonic charities. Brethren are expected to join him with donations, giving what they feel their financial circumstances will allow. Many choose to do this by Direct Debit of say £5/month together with a Gift Aid Declaration. Would you be willing to contribute in this fashion?

Members of the Committee should be asked if they have any further questions, similarly the candidate should be asked if he has any questions to ask. Finally, the candidate should be given the opportunity to withdraw his application if, in the light of the information he has been given in the interview, he feels that Freemasonry is not for him.

ANNEX D

INFORMATION FOR THE INITIATE

Dear Mr.....

I am very pleased to tell you that at its last meeting, the (name)Lodge voted for your initiation into the Lodge at its next meeting on (date) to be held at (name of meeting place). The meeting at which you are due to be initiated is scheduled to start at (time). You should arrive at least fifteen minutes before that time and you will be met at the main entrance by your Proposer. This will be the first of three ceremonies needed to make you a Master Mason.

Dress for the meeting is a dark suit, white shirt, black tie, black socks and shoes; you should also provide yourself with a pair of white gloves. At this stage you will not need your own regalia. You should also bring a cheque for £..... (£..... for your Initiation Fee and £..... Lodge subscription).

It may be that you have friends who are members of other Lodges who would wish to attend your Initiation ceremony. If you wish to invite them, will you please let me have their names, Masonic rank and the name and number of their Lodges before (date).

The Lodge will be delighted to welcome them, but you will be responsible for the payment of their dining fees of £.../head.

At the conclusion of your Initiation, you will be formally introduced to your Mentor whose task it is to make your entrance into the Masonic world easy and pleasurable.

Finally the Lodge very much look forward to welcoming you into its numbers and the members hope that you will be very happy in their company. Should you have any further problems, please consult either your Proposer, your Secunder or me.

Yours sincerely

Lodge Secretary