



Freemasonry in White Ensign Lodge No. 9169

A Guide and Aid for New and Aspiring Members,
their Proposers and Seconders by W.Bro. Les Leek.
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**UNITED GRAND LODGE
OF ENGLAND**

Preface and Acknowledgements

This booklet has been written to improve the questions and information that a person interested in joining a Lodge would require. It was felt that perhaps some brethren with a little more experience could anticipate what they should be explaining to prospective candidates, so they were aware of just what Freemasonry is really all about.

One of the more recent brethren joining the lodge said that although the lodge had taken great trouble to discover their motives in wanting to join, the emphasis had been on the practical matters - could they afford the costs of fees and regalia, did they have the proper clothing and the importance of paying annual subscriptions at the proper time.

Not enough, however, was said about the ideals of Freemasonry, where it fits into society, what are the expectations of the Lodge he was about to join, and what he had a right to expect from Freemasonry. These and other questions need to be addressed if we are to encourage the right calibre of men into Freemasonry and ensure that we retain them in our Lodges for the good of the craft and to the benefit of society in general.

This booklet, whilst specific to White Ensign Lodge, will help not only the candidates but also their proposers or seconders who feel they need some assistance in explaining what they are encouraging their friends to join.

There are a number of excellent publications which have gone a long way to explaining to brethren the degrees through which they have passed and encouraging membership of another avenue for Freemasons known as the Royal Arch. However, not too much appears to have been written in a practical form for those who have not yet made the decision as to whether Freemasonry is what they are looking for. I hope that this booklet will help to fill that gap. There is nothing in these pages that cannot be revealed freely to anyone outside of Freemasonry who is genuinely interested in the Craft.

I must acknowledge the various leaflets published by the Board of General Purposes of the United Grand Lodge of England in recent years, notably 'Freemasonry and Society' which were of help in deciding on the content of this booklet and to John Handley for his assistance in producing this booklet.

Useful links to freemasonry in general, the Provincial Grand Lodge of Worcestershire, the Grand Lodge of England (UGLE) the Masonic Charitable Foundation and of course White Ensign Lodge are shown below.

Introduction

We are pleased that you have expressed an interest in becoming a Freemason and, in particular a member of White Ensign Lodge, which was originally founded as a Royal Navy and Royal Marines lodge over thirty years ago.

Over the ensuing years we have admitted new members from other military services, including the British Army, the Royal Air Force and latterly other members who have served, or have a relative who has served under the crown in any capacity. In addition to military service, this type of membership includes the Merchant Navy, the Emergency Services, HM Prison Service, The Civil Service or Local Government Service. The list is not exhaustive, but the original ethos of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines plays a very great part in our ceremonies and at the Festive Board.

We believe that White Ensign Lodge is one of the most prestigious and vibrant Freemasons' lodge in the country with a history which few others can match. The majority of our members live mainly in the midlands area of England, but we have others who currently live and work in London, the Home Counties, and the South and West of England.

One of our members, a former Royal Marine, travels the world as a sports commentator and television presenter, but they all make every effort to attend our ceremonies, and they all have one thing in common: the camaraderie and lifetime friendships they enjoy in White Ensign Lodge.

They come from all walks of life including all trades and businesses, the self-employed, academia, students and the retired members who utilise their invaluable business and life skills to keep White Ensign Lodge so vibrant and progressive, whilst at the same times retaining our ancient traditions.

White Ensign Lodge meets at the Redditch Masonic Hall, 21 Easemore Road, Redditch, five times a year on the last Friday of January, March, May and October, and on the first Friday of December

At the October Lodge Meeting we celebrate the Battle of Trafalgar and traditionally have a large number of fraternal visitors from all over the country. At all meetings of White Ensign Lodge we normally finish the formal part of the evening by 1930 hours and we then move to the Bar for a traditional 'Tot' of Navy Rum, following which we enter our dining room, which we call in naval parlance, 'The Mess Deck' and dine in style enjoying the company of our members and visitors

Now that our history and aspirations of White Ensign Lodge have been explained, there are various steps you must take before you finally decide to join us, but please do understand if you do choose to join, and all preliminary steps outlined later in this booklet have been successfully completed, you will be welcomed into our lodge with open arms. It is very important that you read this booklet carefully and that you thoroughly understand the nature of Freemasonry, what you can expect from being a Freemason, and what Freemasonry has a right to expect from you.

About Freemasonry

What is Freemasonry?

Freemasonry is among the oldest non-religious fraternal societies in the world. It is a society of men who are concerned with **moral and spiritual values**.

It encourages men to live better lives, to discipline themselves and to consider their relationships with others. Because it is a basic and essential requirement that every member professes and maintains a belief in a Supreme Being, it has a spiritual basis. However, it is **not a religion**, nor should it ever be regarded as a substitute for any form of religious faith.

In fact, Freemasons are strictly forbidden to discuss matters of religion in the Masonic environment. The Bible (known by Freemasons as The Volume of the Sacred Law') is always open when Lodges meet. Obligations are sworn on or involve the Volume of the Sacred Law or whichever holy book is held sacred by the man concerned.

Freemasons attempt to follow three great principles which represent a way of achieving higher standards in life:

Brotherly Love - tolerance and respect for the opinions of others and kindly, understanding, behaviour towards fellow creatures.

Relief - practising charity, not only for other Freemasons, but also for the whole community. Freemasonry has always been concerned with the education of young people and the care of orphans, the sick and the aged, and continues this work. Large sums are regularly given to national and local charities – more of this later!

Truth - Freemasons always strive for truth, demanding high moral standards and aiming to achieve them in their own lives.

Freemasonry is a society which has private methods of recognition i.e. of proving membership. These methods may have been derived from those used by operative stonemasons in the Middle Ages to protect the secrets of their craft. They are now similarly used to preserve Freemasonry's method of teaching morality. All Freemasons are totally free to acknowledge their membership and indeed are encouraged to do so when asked by someone whose reasons are genuine and not merely to denigrate Freemasonry. There is no secret about its aims and principles but, like many other societies including clubs, churches, the military etc, it regards some of its internal affairs as being of no concern to other people. The meeting places of Freemasons are not secret - indeed some are open to the public.

Freemasons gain from Freemasonry only as much as they are prepared to put into it by way of commitment to the ideals mentioned above. Thereby they experience a friendship which can only be felt from within the organisation and a spiritual and moral uplift which is very real but is hard to explain.

The first of the 'Antient Charges' from the 'Book of Constitutions', shown at the end of this booklet states admirably what Freemasonry is meant to be.

What kind of men are Freemasons?

Men of all ages, races, colours, religions, politics or financial or social standing. We have members who are part of our Royal family, professions, trades, skills, arts, sciences, businesses, manual occupations - both the employed and self-employed and, sadly, in these days, the unemployed.

When admitted a man becomes known as a 'Brother' and remains so for the rest of his Masonic career. It is also pointed out to candidates that in Freemasonry all Brethren are 'on the level'.

Although financial standing is not a bar to becoming a Freemason, it must be appreciated that you should be able to afford the minimum obligations of membership (see 'Finances').

Conditions for admission

There are, however, certain preconditions of membership of any Masonic lodge.

- 1 You must believe in a Supreme Being**
- 2 You must be at least 21 years of age (There are exceptions such as the son of a Freemason who has reached the full age of 18 years or a student entering under the UGLE Universities Scheme who must also be of the full age of 18 years.)**
- 3 You must not engage in discussion on matters of religion or politics on Masonic occasions**
- 4 You must profess allegiance to the Sovereign of your country and all that the Sovereign represents**
- 5 You must be prepared to take an oath to preserve the private aspects of Freemasonry**
- 6 You must be willing to strictly observe the Laws, Regulations and Constitutions of Freemasonry**
- 7 You must be of good character and be prepared to uphold the Civil and Criminal Laws of any country in which you may reside, either temporarily or permanently**
- 8 You should have the full support of your partner, if any**

Society, Family and your Job

A Freemason's duty to society as a citizen must **always** prevail over any obligation to other Freemasons. Freemasonry will severely censure and probably expel any Freemason who attempts to shield another Freemason who has acted dishonourably or unlawfully.

Freemasonry must never be allowed to harm a man's family or other connections by taking too much of his time or his money or causing him to act in any other way against their interests.

If it is ever proved that a Freemason has gained an unfair advantage over another person because of his membership of the Order this is a serious matter and a view will be taken. Members must never use any sort of Masonic certificate or evidence of membership to advertise a business or other enterprise nor use any sort of Masonic device or description on stationery or any other form of media.

Freemasonry is compatible with any form of occupation whatsoever, but all Freemasons must be careful not to compromise their living and the living of their dependants.

The principles of Freemasonry should, at all times, strengthen a man in fulfilling his public and private responsibilities.

What happens on a Lodge evening?

The formal business part of the evening where usually one of the masonic ceremonies takes place in the lodge room or temple where Royal Navy and Royal Marines traditions and protocol play an important role. This is a very interesting part of the evening where members are dressed in masonic regalia and history is always to the fore in our traditional ceremonies.

Afterwards we adjourn to the bar for a traditional "Tot" of Navy Rum followed by dinner in our dining room, known as the "*Festive Board*" or in Royal Navy parlance, "*The Mess Deck*"

At those present enjoy a very convivial dinner with wine served at the table. Dinner is run on Royal Navy and Royal Marine tradition during which toasts are given to the Queen and various members of the Order. There are a few (hopefully!) short speeches. Be sure to wear your White Ensign pin badge and do not transgress in the lodge or the festive board because the Master at Arms will take note and you could be fined, with the proceeds going to the lodge charity fund (usually 50p or for serious transgressions it could be £1, but all in good fun)

Trafalgar Night, the last Friday in October each year is the highlight of our masonic year and one that is always remembered within White Ensign Lodge both within the Temple and particularly at the Festive Board.

The installation of the new Master of the Lodge takes place in December each year, and again is one of the highlights of the year.

Standards and Conduct

Dress

All members of the Lodge are expected to wear dark lounge suits, white shirts (or with only a subdued colour or pattern) together with the official Worcestershire Masonic tie, branch of service tie or black tie. Shoes and socks should ideally be black. White gloves are worn by all members during the Masonic meeting but not at dinner! .

As well as for reasons of equality and uniformity the standard dress has a symbolic significance in Freemasonry.

Miniature medals are worn at the Festive Board.

Attendance

Before every meeting each member of the Lodge receives a printed 'summons' or 'circular', distributed by email, which requests his attendance and advises the date, time and business of the lodge. Members should try and attend on every occasion unless prevented by family, work, business commitments or other unforeseen circumstances.

Behaviour

Although Freemasonry has serious aims and important ideals to convey, most members also join to enjoy the fellowship, the conversation and simply have some fun. This too is a vitally important part of Freemasonry.

While members are encouraged to enjoy 'good food and good wine' excesses must be avoided at all times. Freemasonry is not just another dining or drinking club.

We want Brethren to enjoy themselves - but with moderation.

Financial commitments

You must be fully aware of the financial commitments you are expected to make. It cannot be stressed enough that **at no time should your Masonic financial obligations be detrimental to the welfare of yourself, your family or those who depend upon you.**

Lodge finances

Like any other organisation, lodges and their administrative bodies have operating costs. These costs must be borne out of Initiation and Joining fees as well as annual subscriptions.

All lodges pay a per capita fee for each member to Grand Lodge in London, the Grand Charity and to Provincial Grand Lodge for the purpose of administering Freemasonry and its charitable funds. In addition, the Lodge also has to pay for the costs of its occupancy of the Masonic Hall and any other such as printing etc.

The main item of income in any Lodge is the Annual Subscription from all members.

Initial costs

When you first join Freemasonry at White Ensign Lodge, you will be required to pay £311.40 which covers the necessary dues and Annual Lodge Subscription plus a further payment of approximately £23 (dependent on the chosen menu) for the meal following the meeting. The initiation fees are derived from the Schedule of Fees shown at (Appendix A)

The only regular commitment in subsequent years will be your annual subscription (currently £125.00) which is payable in advance at the annual installation or by a monthly Bank Standing Order which spreads the cost over a year. It is a requirement under the Bye-Laws of White Ensign Lodge for all members to have a Mess Account which is administered by the Lodge Treasurer, and which through this account you can pay your dining fees or other costs for lodge social functions. The Treasurer produces a Mess Account statement for each member annually.

Charity

At most meetings charitable collections are taken and you will be expected to contribute within your means.

No Freemason is ever expected to contribute any more than his circumstances in life may allow.

The charitable funds in Freemasonry are distributed to needy and distressed Freemasons, their families and Dependants and also to a large variety of non-Masonic international, national and local charities such as Air Ambulance, Cancer Research, Scouts etc.

What next?

How do I apply to join?

Once you have considered what Lodge membership entails and the calls on your time and finances and you wish to proceed then two members of the Lodge will Propose and Second you as a candidate for Freemasonry.

They will provide a **Registration Form** for completion, first by you then by each of them. The completed form (together with any other forms required by Grand Lodge) will be passed to the Lodge Secretary. No fees are normally payable until such time as you are admitted to the Lodge.

What happens next?

The Lodge Membership Officer, followed by the Lodge Secretary will scrutinise the Registration form and, if satisfactory, you will be called upon by appointment to discuss your application at an informal meeting with the Lodge Membership Officer or another senior member of the lodge and raise any queries or issues which require clarification. Thereafter, it is normal practice that you and your partner will be invited to any lodge social functions so that other members of the lodge and their partners can meet you in an informal setting. The last step would be another informal meeting with Past Masters and perhaps other members of the lodge, and, at if you wish, you may bring your partner if any, to be part of these discussions so they are fully aware of the commitments you are entering into.

If you are happy to proceed and those brethren of the lodge that have met you feel that you will fit in with the Lodge then you will be formally proposed at a meeting and every member of the Lodge will be entitled to vote in a **secret ballot** at a Lodge meeting as to whether you should be admitted as a member. If the ballot is satisfactory you will receive a letter from the Lodge Secretary inviting you to attend for your Initiation at a regular meeting of the Lodge.

What will happen at my interviews/meetings?

You should have read this booklet very thoroughly and be prepared to answer a few basic questions about yourself, your beliefs your motives and intentions. You will also be sent open source web links to other areas of interest for aspiring freemasons.

The interviews will all be informal, but the brethren must, however, be sure that you are a fit and proper person to be admitted. You will also have the opportunity to ask any question or raise any matter at any time which may be something you may not sure about.

What happens on the night I become a freemason?

You should arrive in plenty of time, properly dressed as indicated above. You do not require your new Masonic apron at this meeting. An Officer of the Lodge will attend to you and (as you might expect!) the Treasurer will come to obtain the Initiation Fee and Annual Subscription.

You will then pass through the ceremony of Initiation under the guidance of Officers of the Lodge. Rest assured that you will not be embarrassed in any way and will enjoy this unique experience.

No doubt you will be nervous, but you need to try to relax as much as possible and take in as much of the ceremony as you can. Always remember that every Mason in the room has had the same experience, or a similar experience, and sympathises with how you feel.

The Officers of the Lodge normally perform the entire ceremony from memory (and are expected to make a good job of it) so it is probably true to say that they will be even more nervous than you!

After the ceremony, at the Festive Board, there may be a toast to your health and future and you will be expected to give a very brief reply to this. Speaking in public is never easy (as many of us will testify) but your Proposer and/or Secunder will give you help with what to say.

This is a very special night for you - one you will always want to remember, so enjoy it to the full.

Learning more..

More about your application

If you want to know anything further please do not hesitate to ask your Proposer or Secunder, any member of the Lodge or any Freemason of your acquaintance.

Further Masonic studies

Once you have passed through the three-degree ceremonies and have become a Master Mason you may wish to further your Masonic knowledge, such as membership of the Holy Royal Arch which is the next step in your masonic journey. Subscribe to the UGLE magazine, Freemasonry Today. The new Solomon website from the UGLE will help you in your quest for masonic knowledge and is well worth reading.

Finally

Now that you have learnt something of what Freemasonry is all about and its expectations, we hope that you feel you would still like to share our fellowship. However, it is essential that you look carefully and honestly at yourself, your family, your occupation and all your circumstances in life and ask these questions:

- 1 Do I want to be part of a well-organised society that reaches across the whole world; an Order inspired with high motives assisting all of its members to be better men?**
- 2 Is Freemasonry really what I'm looking for to assist in improving myself as a person, as a citizen and as a 'Brother' to other men?**
- 3 Do I want to experience a whole new sphere in my social life and that of my family – a social life which can bring much fun, enjoyment and satisfaction.**
- 4 Can I make a commitment to the time, the finances and the principals involved without harming my family or connections?**
- 5 Do I, and my dependants, see Freemasonry as being part of our lives for the foreseeable future?**

If you are sure you **can** answer 'YES' to all the questions, ask your Proposer and/or Secunder to progress matters for you and we look forward to seeing you in the Lodge in due time.

Remember that at all times throughout your Masonic journey, your colleagues at White Ensign Lodge will support you and you will develop lifetime friends amongst them. If in doubt about anything, at any time, all you have to do is ask.

Remember, as a Freemason, you will never be alone, and if you are unsure about anything during your journey through Freemasonry just ask.

The first of the Antient Charges from the Book of Constitutions

The Charges of a FREE-MASON Etc., Etc.

I. Concerning GOD and RELIGION

A MASON is obliged, by his tenure, to obey the moral law; and if he rightly understands the art, he will never be a stupid atheist nor an irreligious libertine. He, of all men, should best understand that God seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh at the outward appearance, but God looketh to the heart.

A mason is, therefore, particularly bound never to act against the dictates of his conscience. Let a man's religion or mode of worship be what it may, he is not excluded from the order, provided he believes in the glorious architect of heaven and earth, and practise the sacred duties of morality. Masons unite with the virtuous of every persuasion in the firm and pleasing bond of fraternal love; they are taught to view the errors of mankind with compassion, and to strive, by the purity of their own conduct, to demonstrate the superior excellence of the faith they may profess. Thus, masonry is the centre of union between good men and true, and the happy means of conciliating friendship amongst those who must otherwise have remained at a perpetual distance.

Appendix A

White Ensign Lodge Fees 2018

In accordance with Lodge By-Laws

	Income	Expenditure
Subscription	125.00	
UGLE		41.00
Grand Charity		17.00
PGL		12.00
RMC Capitation		55.00
	125.00	125.00
Initiation	100.00	
UGLE	74.40	74.40
PGL	12.00	12.00
Redditch Masonic Club		5.00
Book of Constitutions		12.00
MM Apron		40.00
Book of Ritual		13.00
Lodge		30.00
	186.40	186.40
Joining	30.00	
PGL	12.00	12.00
Redditch Masonic Club		5.00
Lodge		25.00
	42.00	42.00
<u>Total Payable on Initiation</u>	<u>311.40</u>	
<u>Total Payable on Joining</u>	<u>167.00</u>	