



**An Initial Guide
to Freemasonry
In Ireland**

Declaration of Fundamental Principles of the Order

1. The first condition of admission into, and membership of, the Order is a belief in the Supreme Being. This is essential and admits of no compromise.
2. The Bible, referred to by Freemasons as the Volume of the Sacred Law, is always open in the Lodges. Every candidate is required to take his Obligation on that Book or on the Volume which is held by his particular creed to impart sanctity to an oath or promise taken upon it.
3. Everyone who enters Freemasonry is at the outset strictly forbidden to countenance any act which may have a tendency to subvert peace and good order of Society; he must pay due obedience to the law of any State in which he resides or which may afford him protection, and he must never be remiss in the allegiance due to the Sovereign / Head of State of his native land.
4. While Irish Freemasonry thus inculcates in each of its members the duties of loyalty and citizenship, it reserves to the individual the right to hold his own opinion with regard to public affairs. But neither in any Lodge, nor at any time in his capacity as a Freemason, is he permitted to discuss or to advance his views on theological or political questions.
5. The Grand Lodge has always consistently refused to express any opinion on questions of foreign or domestic State policy either at home or abroad, and it will not allow its name to be associated with any action, however humanitarian it may appear to be, which infringes its unalterable policy of standing aloof from every question affecting the relations between one government and another, or between political parties, or questions as to rival theories of government.
6. The Grand Lodge is aware that there do exist Bodies, styling themselves as Freemasons, which do not adhere to these principles, and while that attitude exists, the Grand Lodge of Ireland refuses absolutely to have any relations with such Bodies or to regard them as Freemasons.
7. This Grand Lodge is a Sovereign and Independent Body practising Freemasonry only within the three Degrees and only within the limits defined in its Constitution as "Pure Ancient Masonry". It does not recognise or admit the existence of any superior Masonic authority, however styled.
8. There is no secret with regard to any of the basic principles of Freemasonry, some of which have been stated above. The Grand Lodge will always consider the recognition of those Grand Lodges which profess, and practice and can show that they have consistently professed and practised those established and unaltered principles, but in no circumstances will it enter into discussion with a view to any new or varied interpretation of them. They must be accepted and practised wholeheartedly and in their entirety by those who desire to be recognised as Freemasons by the Grand Lodge of Ireland.

Introduction

Through the medium of this booklet, the Grand Lodge of Freemasons of Ireland would like to reach out to those young and not-so-young men who may be considering membership of Freemasonry and to those who have already taken that decision and have recently joined our Order.

As you read through its pages, we hope that you will form a positive opinion of Freemasonry, what it is, how it works and of how each new member can progress within membership.

Freemasonry may be described as a fraternity in that its membership is made up of males, all of 21 years and over.

An essential condition of membership is a belief in a Supreme Being. Beyond that, Freemasonry recognises no distinction of religion and emphasises the duties of loyalty and citizenship. It does not permit discussion of a religious or political nature at meetings or at the suppers and dinners that accompany them, nor does it offer any pecuniary advantages binding one Mason to deal with another or to support him in any way in the ordinary course of business life.

Contrary to popular belief, it is not a secret society. Being active within the community, our Laws and Constitution are available to anyone who seeks them. Our meeting places are well known and open to visitors by arrangement. In addition, a very significant proportion of members are happy to make their membership known and to appear in press publicity and interviews associated with Masonic fund-raising and other events.

But, we do have secrets - words, phrases, grips and signs that become known to those who join us - whose purpose is to help us identify ourselves to each other and to reveal the position in Freemasonry which each of us holds.

If, having read this booklet, you decide that you would like to learn more about Freemasonry, your interest can be satisfied by introducing yourself to one whom you know to be a Freemason, to a Lodge of Freemasons in your area, or by communicating in writing, by telephone to 01-679 5465 or by calling to our headquarters at 17 Molesworth Street, Dublin 2.

Yours sincerely and fraternally,

George Dunlop

Most Worshipful Grand Master



Most Worshipful Brother George Dunlop
Grand Master

Contents

	Page
Welcome.....	3
Our Structure.....	4
Why Become a Freemason	5
Becoming a Freemason.....	5
Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth.....	6
Our Charities	6
Lodge Room Layout	8
Entering Freemasonry	9
Our Meetings	10
Lodge Officers	11
Other Masonic Activities	13
Beginnings of Freemasonry in Ireland.....	15
Famous Freemasons.....	16

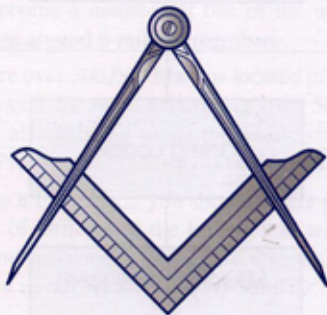
Welcome

Perhaps you are a person considering membership of Freemasonry or one who has recently entered into membership but has yet to become familiar with many of its aspects. In either case, this booklet is for you.

It has been produced by The Grand Lodge of Ireland. Its purpose is to give you a very brief introduction to Freemasonry and to do so in a way that will help form your understanding of what we are, what we do and of what Freemasonry is all about.

For those contemplating membership, it will help answer some of the questions they may have. For members taking their initial steps on the Masonic ladder, it will provide an overview of what lies ahead of them as they begin to experience the joy that membership brings.

Newly introduced members may also find information that they can share with colleagues and friends whom they might wish to welcome into membership.



Our Structure

The Grand Lodge of Freemasons of Ireland, established in the early seventeen hundreds, is the governing body of Freemasonry throughout the island of Ireland.

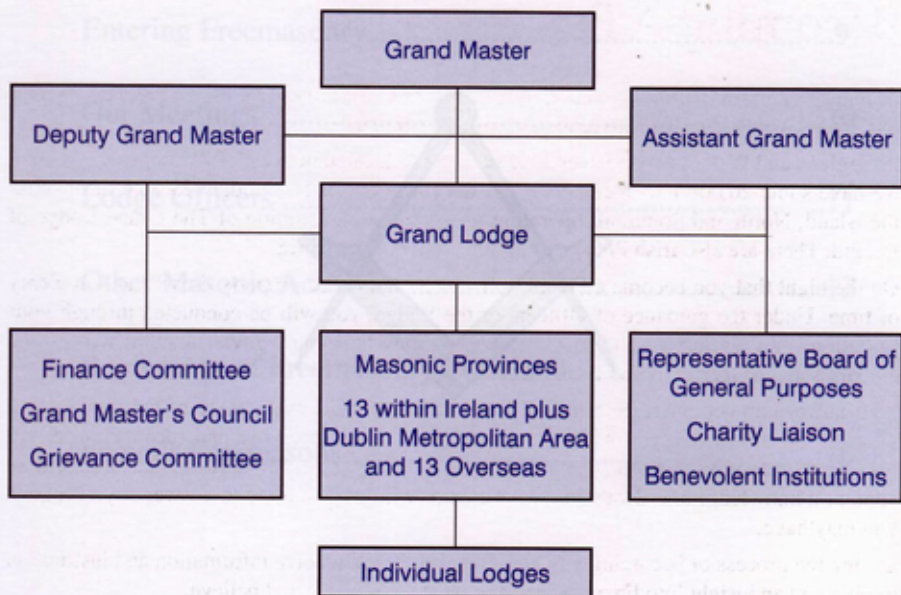
Presided over by The Most Worshipful Grand Master, assisted by his Deputy Grand Master and Assistant Grand Master, The Grand Lodge of Ireland is the supreme authority responsible for the proper governance of Freemasonry in Ireland, north and south. Further afield, its authority extends to a number of Lodges in Africa, Asia, Australia, India and many other places from New Zealand in the East to Jamaica in the West.

Operating under the authority of The Grand Lodge of Ireland is The Grand Lodge Board of General Purposes that is supported by a Steering Committee, a Finance Committee and The Grand Master's Council, bodies that collectively share in the administrative functions involved in the running of such a large organisation.

In Dublin City and County, responsibility for the operations of Lodges is vested in the Metropolitan Board while, around the country, this authority is held by the respective Provincial Grand Lodges.

Lodges, where members are initiated and in which meetings are held, are numerous and can be found in many cities and towns. All persons entering Freemasonry will join one of these Lodges and will likely retain membership of it throughout his life as a Freemason.

Organisation Chart



Why Become A Freemason?

Other than a commonly shared desire to make oneself more generally useful to one's fellow man, the reasons why people join Freemasonry and the things they like about it are as varied as the membership itself.

Many hold the view that membership of Freemasonry helps one to become a better person.

For some, it is a simple quest for knowledge born out of an interest to learn more about the history and mysteries that are held within Freemasonry.

For others, charity and the chance to put something back into Society through Masonic Charity giving is the appeal.

Brotherhood and the chance to meet and become friends with a broad spectrum of people of all walks of life from 21 years and upwards appeals to many.

Self improvement, learning through the practice of ritual, after dinner speech making and the achievement that comes from progressing through the various Lodge Offices culminates in the Office of Worshipful Master.

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!

Membership comprises men of all ages, races, colours, religions, political beliefs and financial or social standing... employed, self-employed, unemployed and retired, from the professions, trades, skills, arts, sciences, business and manual occupations.

Becoming A Freemason

Joining Freemasonry, you become a member of one of the world's oldest secular fraternal societies. Worldwide, there are around 6 million members.

In England and Wales there are over 300,000 Masons located in over 7,750 Lodges. In Ireland, we have some 20,000 plus members and a network of over 500 Lodges located throughout the island, North and South, all operating under the administration of The Grand Lodge of Ireland. There are also Irish Provinces in other parts of the world.

On the night that you become a Freemason you should arrive properly dressed and in plenty of time. Under the guidance of Officers of the Lodge, you will be conducted through your Initiation – an impressive and memorable ceremony that you can rest assured will not be embarrassing or fearful to you in any way.

As a newly initiated member, you will be made welcome at every stage of the introduction process. Once initiated, you will have the support of your proposer and seconder who will provide whatever help you may need during your early years. In addition, your Lodge may appoint a knowledgeable Brother as your mentor who will be there to answer any questions you may have.

During the process of becoming a Freemason you should receive information and instruction to give you an insight into Freemasonry and what we practice and believe.

Brotherly Love, Relief & Truth

Freemasonry consists of a body of men who endeavour to cultivate and exhibit Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth to one another and the world at large, who come together for the purpose of mutual intellectual, social and moral improvement, and who pledge to preserve the mysteries, privileges, customs and rituals that form part of the mosaic of Masonic life.

Though Masonry is not, in any financial sense, a mutual-benefit society, the overriding pursuit of Freemasons is to support a wide variety of Masonic and non-Masonic Charities whose purpose is to provide relief for hard-pressed families of deceased Freemasons and those less fortunate in our Society.

However, because Masonry teaches that a man's first duty is to his family, a person should not join if the associated fees and charitable contributions will be to the detriment of his loved ones.

Our Charities

Charitable giving, and the task of helping to relieve poverty and distress amongst Brethren and their families, is amongst the foundation stones on which Freemasonry is built. In the UK, for example, Freemasonry is the largest contributor to charitable causes after the National Lottery.

Here in Ireland, charitable work is a primary and necessary pursuit, even in this new millennium.

When Freemasons or their dependents fall upon hard times, they may look to the various Masonic Charities for financial assistance. It is for that reason that Freemasons should strive to help Brethren and their families who are ill or in distressed circumstances.

Whilst we are expected to contribute to charitable giving, Freemasons are reminded that it is a voluntary undertaking to which no one should ever over-commit himself.

Due to the increased generosity of Irish Freemasons, this work has been extended in recent years with the result that our Order now actively assists several very worthy non-Masonic causes thereby allowing Society as a whole to benefit from the labours of Irish Freemasons.

In Ireland, there are six main Masonic Charities that are supported by contributions from Brethren. They are:

The Victoria Jubilee Masonic Benevolent Fund

Established in 1888, it provides Annuities for distressed Freemasons and their spouses from all parts of the Irish Constitution.

Masonic Girls Benefit Fund

Like the Masonic Boys Benefit Fund, this Fund provides educational and maintenance grants for the daughters of deceased members who are in education and assists the adult daughters of deceased members who themselves have children in education.

Masonic Boys Benefit Fund

Provides educational and maintenance grants for the sons of deceased members or members who have fallen on hard times and who have children in education.

The Masonic Welfare Fund

Established in 1995, the Masonic Welfare Fund is the youngest of our Charities. Its purpose is to relieve cases of poverty, hardship, sickness and distress among Freemasons, their wives, widows, children and other dependents who may not be eligible under the criteria of other schemes. Its objectives include furthering the education of such persons by awarding scholarships, maintenance allowances, outfits, clothing, tools etc. to assist entry into a trade, profession or service, or to set up business. This fund is able to offer assistance to other Charities, whether or not they are connected with the Fraternity of Freemasons.

Masonic Havens

This fund was set up in 1975 to provide sheltered accommodation for Masons and/or their spouses. At present one facility is located in Monkstown, Co. Dublin consisting of 9 bungalows and 25 apartments. Another facility is in Virginia Co. Cavan with 27 ultra modern bungalows. There is also a nursing home, in Virginia, catering for 45 elderly people and these do not necessarily require a connection with the Order.

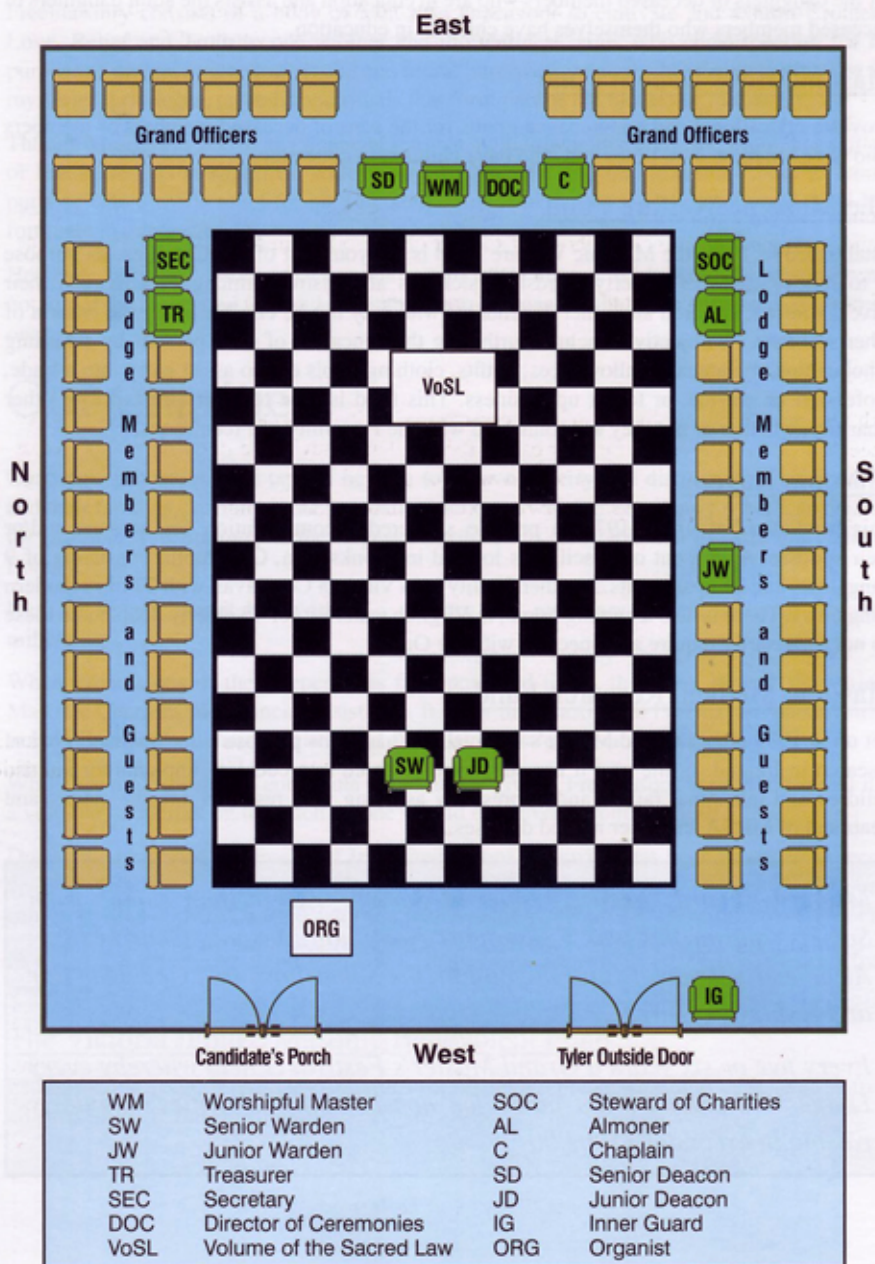
Masonic Medical Research Fund

Set up in 1989 after a Grand Master's Festival of Charity, its purpose is to facilitate medical research in Ireland. In the past it has supported research into cochlear implants for autistic children and into renal failure and is presently assisting with research into the causes and treatment of MRSA and other related diseases.

Masonry regards itself as 'part of Society' rather than 'apart from Society' and in this way we support many non-Masonic Charities e.g. Alzheimer's, Laura Lynn Foundation, the Samaritans and Cochlear Ear and Kidney Research.

Every five or six years a Grand Master's Festival is held whereby every Lodge in Ireland raises funds for non-Masonic Charities, regularly raising in excess of £500,000.

Diagram of Lodge Room Layout



Entering Freemasonry

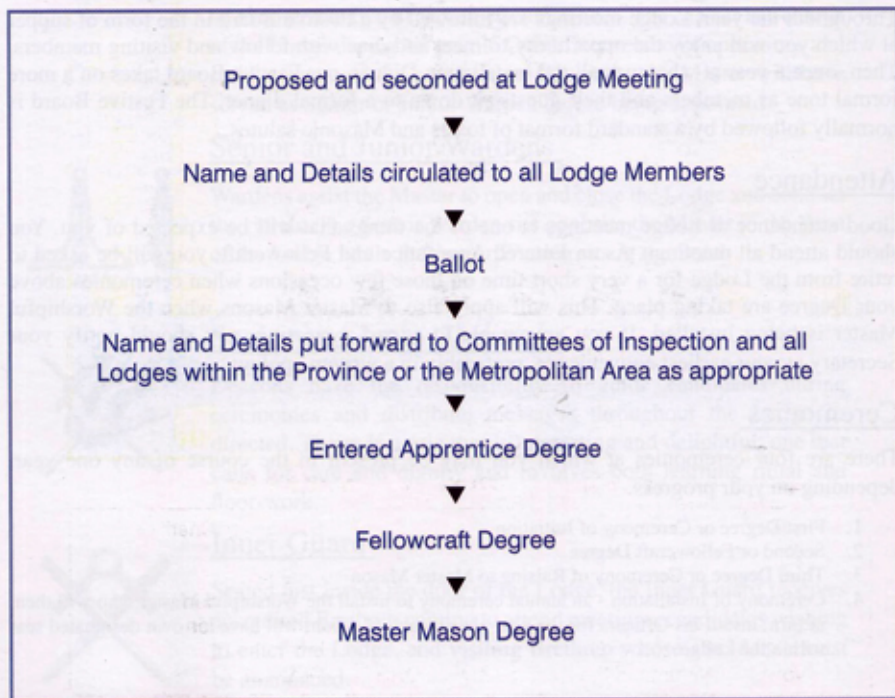
Entering Freemasonry, you join on the First or Entered Apprentice Degree. In that role, you will serve an appropriate period of time before progressing to your Second Degree - that of Fellow Craft. Once again, after an appropriate period of time has been served, you progress to the Third or Sublime Degree of Master Mason.

Your progression through these three Degrees should be completed roughly within one year depending on the volume of work being undertaken in your Lodge.

Upon becoming a Master Mason, your Masonic career begins to open up as privileges are extended to you. These include the right to visit other Lodges in Ireland and Overseas, the opportunity to attend and participate in Degree ceremonies and to carry out Officer functions assigned to you, and the right to propose new members.

Once you have attained your three Degrees, you will start to move through the various Lodge Offices, culminating in your becoming the Worshipful Master.

Each Officer has a role to play in each ceremony that is performed. In office, you will be expected to learn and memorise your part in the ritual and play a role in the team that carries out the various ceremonies. In this, you will have the full support of your fellow Lodge members and nothing will be asked or required of you that you will not be able to handle.



Our Meetings

Freemasonry is similar to many clubs in that the more you put in, the more you will get out.

Our meetings are in two parts - the Lodge Meeting and the Festive Board. Usually, Lodge meetings are held monthly between September and May inclusive, save for those occasions for which it may be necessary to hold an additional emergency meeting.

The dates of these meetings are known in advance so that they may be entered in your diary as permanent appointments around which you can plan your personal activities. Prior to each meeting, you will receive a summons containing an agenda that you should bring with you to your meeting.

Ritual and ceremony are at the core of every Lodge meeting, such is the nature and character of Freemasonry.

As in any association, a certain amount of administrative procedure will demand your attention - matters that include minutes of your previous meeting, discussion and voting on financial matters, news and correspondence, proposing of candidates and balloting for new members. Part of the meeting will also include the collection of alms when each one present will be expected to donate a small sum to charity.

And finally, amongst the highlights that you can look forward to are the various ceremonies that surround the admission into Lodge membership of candidates who have progressed through the various stages of entry.

The Festive Board

Throughout the year, Lodge meetings are followed by a Festive Board in the form of supper at which you will enjoy the opportunity to meet and dine with fellow and visiting members. Then, once a year at what we call the Installation Dinner, our Festive Board takes on a more formal tone as members and their guests sit down to a formal dinner. The Festive Board is normally followed by a standard format of toasts and Masonic salutes.

Attendance

Good attendance at Lodge meetings is one of the things that will be expected of you. You should attend all meetings. As an Entered Apprentice and Fellowcraft, you will be asked to retire from the Lodge for a very short time on those few occasions when ceremonies above your Degree are taking place. This will apply also to Master Masons when the Worshipful Master is being installed. If you are unable to attend a meeting, you should notify your Secretary at your earliest convenience, preferably in a written apology.

Ceremonies

There are four ceremonies at which you may be present in the course of any one year, depending on your progress.

1. First Degree or Ceremony of Initiation
2. Second or Fellowcraft Degree
3. Third Degree or Ceremony of Raising to Master Mason
4. Ceremony of Installation - an annual ceremony to install the Worshipful Master who will then, in turn, install his Officers for the year ahead, each of whom will have his own designated seat within the Lodge.

Lodge Officers

Upon joining a Lodge of Freemasons, one notices the various Officers to whom functions and responsibilities are assigned.

Having achieved the rank of Master Mason, each member can reasonably expect to become an Officer and to progress through the various Officer positions on a path from Inner Guard to the highest office of Worshipful Master. These Offices include those of Worshipful Master, Senior Warden, Junior Warden, Senior Deacon, Junior Deacon and Inner Guard.

Other Officer positions, which are non-progressive in nature, are: Treasurer, Secretary, Chaplain, Almoner, Steward of Charities and Director of Ceremonies.

In order to bring continuity and experience to these roles, the same persons may occupy these latter Offices for a number of years.

Lodge Officers are recognisable by the jewels suspended from their Lodge collars. Their roles are generally indicated by where they sit within Lodge.



Worshipful Master

Elected each year by the Brethren of the Lodge, the Worshipful Master usually occupies the Office for one year, a period that can be extended to two in certain circumstances. The Master has charge of the Lodge during his year in Office, to oversee its operations and conduct most of the ceremonies. Generally, the Master will have served as Senior or Junior Warden before being appointed.



Senior and Junior Wardens

Wardens assist the Master to open and close the Lodge and conduct the rituals. The Senior Warden sits opposite the Master in the West of the Lodge while the Junior Warden sits in the South.



Senior and Junior Deacons

Deacons have the responsibility to guide candidates during ceremonies and distribute messages throughout the Lodge as directed. Theirs is a role that is interesting and delightful, one that calls for care and dignity and involves both learning ritual and floor-work.



Inner Guard

Seated just inside the door of the Lodge, the Inner Guard receives accredited Brethren coming to attend meetings, candidates wishing to enter the Lodge, and visiting Brethren whose attendance must be announced.



Treasurer

As you would imagine, the Treasurer is responsible for the finances of the Lodge, including the collection of subscriptions, preparation of accounts, payments to Charities and so forth.



Secretary

The Secretary is the conduit between Grand Lodge, Provincial Grand Lodge and your Lodge. He deals with correspondence, prepares and reads minutes, issues notices of meetings, submits membership returns and administers all matters connected with the smooth running of the Lodge. Normally, a Secretary holds the post for a number of years.



Director of Ceremonies

His function is to direct the ceremonial aspects of meetings, to ensure that they are efficiently conducted with dignity and decorum and that all concerned are aware in advance of what they have to do.



Almoner

This officer has the knowledge of the variety of resources available to Brethren in time of need, the Almoner is effectively the Lodge Welfare Officer responsible for maintaining contact with Brethren who may be incapacitated and unable to attend meetings; with Lodge widows, and with members suffering from illness.



Steward of Charities

The Steward of Charities is responsible for co-ordinating the Lodge's charitable affairs and for encouraging members to donate charitably within their means.



Chaplain

As you would imagine again, the Chaplain is responsible for the religious aspect to be maintained within the Lodge.



Organist

Some Lodges are fortunate to have a member capable of playing the organ and he will play at every meeting.

Other Masonic Activities

Masonic Education

In every Province and in the Dublin Metropolitan Area, classes of instruction in Masonic Ritual etc. are run. These provide a most useful forum for the new Mason to learn in a friendly informal way the tenets and ritual of Freemasonry and give an excellent basic knowledge of the Order. Contact can be made through The Grand Lodge Office.



The Royal Arch Chapter

The Royal Arch Degree is the continuation of the story of the Temple as described in a Craft Lodge. The Degree is conferred in Royal Arch Chapters and any Master Mason, of one year's good standing is entitled to become a Royal Arch Mason. While Royal Arch Masonry has its own governing body, it has long been regarded as an integral, even essential part of a Freemason's journey.

An Irish Mason's first encounter with a Royal Arch Chapter is in a Lodge of Mark Master Masons, where the Degree of Mark Master Mason is conferred. The newly made Mark Master Mason is then fully qualified to become a Royal Arch Mason.

The Mark Master Mason Degree expands on the Masonic duties of fellowship and benevolence, while the Royal Arch Degree contains impressive symbolic content and continues the legend contained in the Master Mason Degree. These should not be considered to be fourth or fifth Degrees, but rather as separate Degrees that complement a Freemason's knowledge.



The Council of Knight Masons

Within Knight Masonry, the story of the Temple in Jerusalem is expanded further with the description of the building of the second Temple. It is the natural continuation of the story of Solomon's Temple as detailed in Craft Lodges and Royal Arch Chapters.

Three Degrees are conferred in Councils of Knight Masons; Knight of the Sword, Knight of the East and Knight of the East and West. Within these Degrees, the story of the second Temple is explained. The events contained within these Degrees can be seen all over the world in many different Masonic Orders; it is often communicated in a truncated manner. It is widely agreed that in the Irish system these Degrees are conferred in the most elaborate detail and in an accurate chronological order.

Just like a Craft Lodge, a Mark Lodge and a Royal Arch Chapter, Councils of Knight Masons are open to all Freemasons of any faith or background and they do not have to be invited to join, simply ask! The requirement for joining is membership of a Royal Arch Chapter for at least one year. The Degrees themselves are intricate and detailed and convey impressive lessons of virtue and truth, and by becoming a Knight Mason you are completing the Masonic legend of the Temple in Jerusalem within the Irish Masonic family.



The Order of the Temple

Membership of this Order is open only by invitation and also only to those of the Trinitarian Christian Faith. Members are required to be five years a Master Mason and two years a member of a Royal Arch Chapter before being considered for membership. Requests to join are not entertained.



Prince Masons

The next Degree beyond the Order of the Temple is Prince Masonry and members are again invited to join Chapters and only come from the members of the Order of the Temple. The number of Chapters are limited as are the number of Members within each Chapter.



The Ancient and Accepted Rite

This body takes members exclusively from the ranks of Prince Masons and confers the various Degrees of that Order. In Ireland the Degrees conferred are - 28°, 30°, 31°, 32°, & 33°

Normally these Degrees, again by invitation only, are reserved for the most senior and experienced members of the Masonic Order.

Beginnings of Freemasonry in Ireland

The origins of the Masonic Order in Ireland remain obscure and it is not known when it was established at a basic Lodge level.

It has been suggested that it may have developed out of the Stonemasons' guilds - organisations which served to regulate prices, wages and standards of work. The individual would learn his trade first as an apprentice, then as a fellow and finally would become a master craftsman. In order for him to prove his practical skills the craftsman would be taught secret signs of different levels of proficiency, which would identify him to a potential employer. These men would gain prestige within Society, as the skills of the craftsmen were revered.

Freemasonry may have been set up with this as its template. Certainly the terminology and structures correlate. The Order, as it is today, has inherited many of its modes of working from the operative Stonemasons, and having the secret signs of recognition of each other is being faithful to the same tradition which gives the title of Entered Apprentice to the new member, or Master to the head of the Lodge.

Documentary evidence for Freemasonry in Ireland dates from 1688, and is in the form of a manuscript written in Trinity College Dublin, displaying a knowledge of Freemasonry which can leave no doubt as to the existence, at the time, of working Lodges. The references to Freemasonry are quite accurate: secrecy, benevolence, the term Lodge and the prerequisite of being of good character for admittance, are all mentioned. The professions of members listed include gentlemen, mechanics, parsons, thatchers, poets, doctors, butchers and tailors.

The Grand Lodge of Ancient Free and Accepted Masons of Ireland, the ruling body of the Order, can be traced back to 1725, at least. Evidence for this comes from the Dublin Weekly Journal of June that year, where an account is given of the installation of Richard Parsons, the Earl of Rosse as Grand Master on St. John's Day. The Irish Grand Lodge is the second oldest in the world, after the English one, which dates from 1717.

The function of Grand Lodge - which has always been based in Dublin - was, as it remains today, the regulation of the Lodges, per the Laws and Constitutions

A Lodge's permission to meet, from a given date, in a specific location, stems from its Warrant - issued to it by The Grand Lodge. However, The Grand Lodge of Ireland was the first in the world to produce Travelling Warrants - issued to army regiments (from the 1730's) and enabling the Brethren to meet Masonically wherever they happened to be stationed - unlike ordinary Warrants, which confined the Lodge members to a specific meeting place. Travelling Warrants helped to spread the craft globally and, therefore, although the vast majority of membership naturally has always been based in Ireland, there are also Irish Lodges established in other countries such as Australia, England, Nigeria and South Africa.

Freemasons' Hall, 17 Molesworth Street, the headquarters of the Order in Ireland, dates from 1866 and was custom built. Prior to this date Grand Lodge met in Tailors' Hall in Back Lane, off High Street, rented accommodation in Dawson Street (the Royal Irish Academy building), D'Olier Street (no. 16, a tavern, and known as The Freemasons' Coffee-House), Dame Street (Commercial Buildings).

Famous Freemasons

Because Freemasonry is an organisation whose membership is composed of ordinary men drawn from all walks of life, it is natural that the ranks of famous Freemasons would also include those who achieved high rank across a diverse range of activities and undertakings.

Famous Irishmen who were Freemasons include Edmund Burke, Daniel O'Connell, the Duke of Wellington, Oscar Wilde, the Dukes of Leinster, Henry Joy McCracken and many others.

Internationally, they included several Kings and political leaders, among them Edward VII, Sir Winston Churchill, American Presidents Washington, Truman and both Roosevelts.

In the Arts and Entertainment world, members included such notable figures as Robert Burns, William Hogarth, Goethe, Sir Walter Scott, Marc Chagall, actors Clark Gable, Peter Sellers and John Wayne, singer Nat King Cole and the legendary Davy Crockett and Buffalo Bill.

And in the realm of composers men like Mozart, Haydn, Liszt, Gershwin and Gilbert and Sullivan were all members.



Arthur Sullivan



George Gershwin



Joseph Haydn



Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart



Peter Sellers



Clark Gable



Rudyard Kipling



Sir Walter Scott



Sir Winston Churchill



Edward VII



Oscar Wilde



Duke of Wellington



George Washington



Ronald Reagan



Harry Truman



Franklin D. Roosevelt



Edmund Burke



Franz Liszt



Daniel O'Connell



William S. Gilbert



Buffalo Bill



Davy Crockett



Nat King Cole



John Wayne



Goethe



William Hogarth



Robert Burns



Teddy Roosevelt

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