

**The Worshipful Society of Free Masons,
Rough Masons, Wallers, Slaters,
Paviors, Plaisterers and Bricklayers**

Usually known as:

“THE OPERATIVES”



**A Masonic Society which exists to
perpetuate a memorial of the practices of
operative Free Masons existing prior to
modern speculative Freemasonry.**

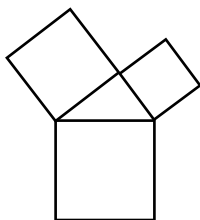
*“Speculative masons are happy to trace their origins to
the practices of the ancient stone masons, but many
then tend to forget all about them.” –
- from “An Introduction to the Society”*

THE OPERATIVES DO NOT FORGET!



WHAT MIGHT I GAIN FROM MEMBERSHIP?

Well, we all remember being admonished to make a daily advancement in Masonic knowledge, and by joining the Operatives, it is possible to find out just why it is that Past Masters in Craft Lodges wear a jewel like this on their collars:-



Or what the “Five Points of Fellowship” really means. Or why some Lodges insist on “squaring” the Lodge. Or what is meant by a point within a circle from which every part of the circumference is equidistant. Or just why it is customary to place the candidate at the North East corner of the Lodge. And many other points which might have puzzled you over the years.

WHERE DO WE MEET?

In “Assemblages” (we do not call them Lodges) which meet in ordinary Masonic Halls in England, Wales, France, Belgium, Canada, Spain, Australia and New Zealand.






HOW MANY MEMBERS DOES THE SOCIETY HAVE?

There are currently about 2000 members in the Society world-wide, but so popular is it becoming that membership is increasing rapidly, new units called “Assemblages” are being formed in the U.K., and interest is being shown in countries as far afield as the U.S.A.

WHAT IS DIFFERENT ABOUT ITS CEREMONIES?

There is a separate “lodge” for each of the seven grades of the Society, as well as a considerable amount of furniture and equipment which has to be used and removed during the ceremonies, together with a variety of different ashlar which are used to indicate the progress of the workmen “in the quarries”. The idea of toiling in a quarry is important in this Society and many “lodges” incorporate the word “quarry” in their titles; e.g.. Collyweston Quarry and Purbeck Quarries, to emphasise that fact.

It is also emphasised by the unique role of the “D.C.” (known as the “**S**uper **I**ntendent of the **W**ork”) who has his own table of equipment, much of which is very large, to “try, and adjust” the sides of the buildings, - unlike the working tools in many Craft lodges which are small, used only for symbolic purposes, and could not be used to “try” the sides of any kind of building. The role of the “S.I.W.” as the most experienced craftsman is further exemplified by the fact that in the absence of the “Master”, (in this Society he is known as the “**D**eputy **M**aster **M**ason”), it is the S.I.W. who presides, not an I.P.M.





PROGRESSION

At the head of the Society are the three **Grand Master Masons**. Progression through our seven grades is based on one's performance in the various offices held, as well as the percentage attendance in each office, and during one's membership of the Society. In other words progression depends not on just paying one's subs and simply turning up from time to time, but on regular attendance and doing the job.

The seven grades are:

- I° Indentured Apprentice
- II° Fellow of the Craft
- III° Fitter and Marker
- IV° Setter Erector
- V° Intendent, Overseer, Super Intendent and Warden.
- VI° Passed Master (*N.B. not Past Master*)
- VII° The three Grand Master Masons (together with those appointed to that grade "Honoris Causa")

The first four grades are conferred in an Assemblage of Lodges IV° to I°, but there are separate Assemblages for conferring the higher grades, e.g. The **Senior Passed Master** of a Region confers the VI° in a Lodge of Passed Masters, usually held once per year. In his capacity as head of a Region, the "S.P.M." is known as a **Deputy Grand Master Mason** ("D.G.M.M.").

Progression to the "Chair" can only be made by a member who is VI° or above, and progression to VI° cannot be made unless one has an attendance rate of at least 70% and has previously occupied the Chairs of both Craft and Mark Lodges.





SO WHAT ELSE IS DIFFERENT?

Well, to start off with, the Operative's Lodges are orientated from West to East (i.e. opposite from the normal Craft Lodge), because Solomon sat in the West, - and also so that the Master ("D.M.M.") can see the Sun rising in the East, the Senior Warden can see the Sun setting in the West, and the Junior Warden can observe the Sun at its Meridian.

Sitting at their pedestals in front of the Senior Warden there are two Deputies, "Jachin" and "Boaz", one of whom acts as "Chaplain" and the other as "Doctor" of the Lodge, - important when examining a candidate who is contemplating taking up the strenuous work of a stone mason!

Other notable differences are:

The 3rd Grand Master Mason changes annually during the course of the unique "Ancient Drama" which is held in late September every year as part of the Grand Assembly, which is timed, as far as circumstances will allow, to coincide with the date of the assassination of HAb.

No matter where in the world a meeting is being held, it is always conducted in English, and the first Toast after dinner is always to the monarch in Great Britain.

There is no "Fire" in the Operatives, and the doors are not "tyled" during or after dinner, so that those who are serving can do so uninterrupted.





IS THE REGALIA EXPENSIVE?

Apart from the three Grand Master Masons and Grand Clerk who, on certain occasions, wear gowns and hats, having their origins in antiquity, regalia is minimal and consists simply of a blue collarette from which is suspended the badge of one's grade (provided by the Assemblage). Badges are simply exchanged as progression is made. All members wear the distinctive Society tie.

ARE YOU ELIGIBLE?

The minimum qualification demanded by the Society is Master Mason, Mark Master Mason and Royal Arch Companion, in good standing,

HOW TO JOIN OR OBTAIN FURTHER INFORMATION

Visit our website at:
www.operatives.org.uk

Or contact:
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