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MERSTON CULY LODGE NO. 6879

This work was commissioned by the Lodge Committee with the object of setting out the basic principles of procedure and administration applicable to the Merston Culy Lodge for the information of Brethren, together with a brief history of the Lodge and other matters of Masonic interest.

The Committee emphasise that this should not be regarded as a comprehensive work on Masonic administration in general, but it is hoped that the information contained herein may be of service, particularly to the junior Brethren of our Lodge.

The Committee wish to acknowledge the assistance of those responsible for its compilation.

October, 1967

*PRESENTED BY THE STEWARDS FOR 1967/68 FOR THE USE
BY BRETHREN OF ALL RANKS AND AGES.*

BRIEF HISTORY OF MERSTON CULY LODGE

Merston Culy Lodge owes its existence to the initiative and enterprise of 18 founder Brethren.

The origin of the words 'Merston Culy' and the reasons for the adoption of this name for the Lodge is not without historical interest.

Marston Green, or 'Merestone' as it was then called, dates back to the time of Alfred the Great and is referred to as such in the Domesday Book Map of 1086. At that time it probably consisted of little more than a hedge by a pool, lake or marsh land.

In the Assizes Rolls of 1262 the name had been changed to Merestone De Culy, the words 'De Culy' having some reference to Ralph De Culy, the Lord of the Manor. It then consisted of two hides of land - a hide being as much land as one plough team could cultivate in a year. The name continued with some variations in spelling and pronunciation until 1340 when it became Merston Culy. It remained so for over 300 years until it was changed to Marston Culy in 1610. Since 1830 it has been known as Marston Green.

It is, therefore, appropriate that the Lodge, which was initiated at Marston Green, or Merston Culy, should adopt the ancient name of the village from which it obtained its birth and infant nurture.

The Lodge, which holds its meetings at Stechford Masonic Hall, was consecrated by W.Bro. Ben Marsh, J.P., P.G.D., Deputy Provincial Grand Master in Charge of the Province assisted by W.Bro. Dr. E.L. Bunting, P.G.D., Assistant Provincial Grand Master, both now deceased, at the Masonic Hall, Kings Heath, Birmingham on Saturday, 27th August, 1949.

The Lodge was sponsored by the Samaritan Lodge also meeting at Stechford, and as a token of recognition the Master and his two Wardens are invited by the Lodge to attend annually at our March meeting and they are given the privilege of closing the Lodge proceedings.

In 1954, at the request of the junior Brethren, a Class of Instruction was formed within the Lodge and in 1956 this became a recognised Lodge of Instruction, both of which have been of inestimable value to the Brethren who have attended. The gratitude of the Lodge is due to the Preceptor and the Past Masters who have assisted him. The instruction which has been given has resulted in a very high standard of Masonic ritual performance within the Lodge.

A Banner was presented to the Lodge by two founder Brethren. This was dedicated by the late W.Bro. Dr. E.L. Bunting, Deputy Provincial Grand Master, on Wednesday, 22nd April, 1953. It was hand embroidered in silk and depicts the 'marsh land' already referred to. The remaining symbolisms are all well known to the Brethren and require no further explanation.

This brief history would not be complete without recognition of the initiative and loyal devotion of the Founders whose tenacity of purpose and perseverance has enabled us to claim an honoured place amongst the Masonic Lodges of Worcestershire.

LODGE MEETINGS

The Lodge meets on the 4th Wednesday in each month, September to April, excepting December, at the Stechford Masonic Hall.

The Master and other Officers are elected at the April meeting. The Master is installed at the September meeting.

The Master is assisted in the administration by a Lodge Committee consisting of the Past Masters and Officers. It meets on the Thursday of the week following the Lodge meeting and it is important that all Brethren entitled to do so should attend. Experience and knowledge of procedure is invaluable when occupying the senior offices and this can best be obtained by a regular attendance at meetings of the Lodge Committee. It is also an opportunity of taking part in the general administration.

Following his election, the Master confers, in Committee, with the Past Masters, and discusses his programme for the year and any other matters affecting the wellbeing of the Lodge. This is an Advisory Committee and any recommendations which it may wish to make on matters of general administration are referred to the Lodge Committee for consideration.

ILLNESS OR DISTRESS OF A BROTHER

Occasions have occurred when a Brother has been absent from Lodge meetings due to illness.

The Master asks for the co-operation of the Brethren by reporting to him any cases of illness of a Brother or his immediate family, or other circumstances where the Lodge can be of assistance.

PROCEDURE FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF CANDIDATES FOR INITIATION OR JOINING

INITIATION

1. The proposer and seconder must each be members of the Merston Culy Lodge and it is recommended that they shall have been members of the Craft for a period of not less than 3 years.
2. An Application Form, together with a brief summary of the essential qualifications and other information which a Candidate should know before pursuing his application (see page 9) is obtainable from the Secretary by the proposer.
3. The Application Form, which must be completed by the Candidate and returned to the Secretary by the proposer, must give the following details:-
 - (a) Age
 - (b) Name and address
 - (c) Occupation
 - (d) Place of business
 - (e) Names of proposer and seconder
 - (f) Names and addresses of 4 referees. It is usual to provide referees from outside the Lodge, comprising two Masonic and two others.
 - (g) An applicant not having a place of residence or principal place of business within the Masonic Province of Worcestershire or within the Birmingham Postal Area, the reasons for his not seeking admission to a Lodge in the area of his residence or business must be stated.
4. Verbal applications will under no circumstances be accepted.

5. The Secretary will report the receipt of the application to the Lodge Committee. Notification of the receipt of this application will be sent to all members of the Lodge, and if provisionally approved by the Committee, the name will be included in the List of Candidates. Candidates should be informed by their proposers and seconders that acceptance of the application does not imply acceptance by the Lodge and give some indication of the possible length of time which might elapse before the matter is further considered.
6. Applications for Initiation are considered in order of seniority on the Waiting List. There are two exceptions:
 - (a) A Lewis (the uninitiated son of a Mason). He takes precedence over all others on the List.
 - (b) A Candidate who has been proposed by the Master may be initiated during his Mastership. This is permitted in the case of ONE Candidate only.
7. If a long period has elapsed since the receipt of the original application, a second memorandum giving details of the Candidate will be circulated to the Brethren before the Candidate is interviewed by the Committee. A Brother of the Lodge may raise an objection at this or any other time prior to the Candidate's election by communicating with the Master either verbally or in writing. In the case of the Master being the proposer, the objection can be made to a Warden. The objector will NOT be required to detail his reasons, his identity will not be disclosed under any circumstances, neither will the objection be subject to discussion by the Committee. This procedure will be strictly enforced and there is no compromise.
8. The Lodge Committee will consider the references.

9. Subject to no objections and the references being satisfactory, a Sub-Committee of 3 - the Master, a Warden and a Past Master - will interview the Candidate at his home.
10. The Committee will then interview the Candidate and will receive a report from the Visiting Sub-Committee. Brethren having an interest in the election of the Candidate will withdraw from the meeting whilst the discussion is in progress. It must be impressed on the Candidate by the Master, proposer and seconder that this interview must not be taken as acceptance by the Lodge. If he is not considered acceptable to the Committee, the proposer and seconder will be informed by the Master and the Candidate should be informed by them accordingly.
11. If, in the opinion of the Committee the Candidate is an acceptable person for membership to the Craft and the Merston Culy Lodge in particular, he will be asked to complete the Grand Lodge Application Form and will be proposed and seconded in open Lodge.
12. Full particulars of the Candidate will then be included on the Lodge Summons and a secret ballot will take place at the meeting to which the summons refers. The method of balloting is by white and black balls - white indicating approval and black disapproval. One black ball in the ballot disqualifies a Candidate for membership of the Merston Culy Lodge.
13. If elected, the date of initiation is at the discretion of the Master. If the Candidate is not initiated within 12 months of the ballot, the election is void.
14. The Secretary will inform the successful Candidate, in writing, and advise him to contact his proposer and seconder before the Initiation date. The proposer and seconder should take upon themselves the responsibility of instructing Candidates.

JOINING MEMBERS

15. With the exception of paragraphs 6 and 13, the same procedure applies as for Initiates.
16. A Brother desirous of joining must submit his Grand Lodge Certificate to the Master or Secretary for inspection and produce a certificate from each Lodge of which he is or has been a member to the effect that he is not in default with his dues, etc. In the case of a Brother who is, or has been, a member of a Lodge not under the jurisdiction of the United Grand Lodge of England the Master should be consulted as there are additional requirements to be complied with.
17. In the event of an Initiate and a joining member becoming members of the Lodge on the same evening, the Initiate takes seniority.

WHAT A CANDIDATE SHOULD KNOW

Masonry consists of a body of men banded together to preserve the secrets, customs and ceremonials handed down to them for the purpose of mutual, intellectual, social and moral improvement. Its members endeavour to cultivate and exhibit brotherly love, relief and truth, not only to one another, but to the world at large.

A basic condition of admission to, and membership of the Order is a belief in a Supreme Being. This is essential and admits of no compromise.

It recognises no distinction of religion and whilst inculcating in each of its members the duties of loyalty and citizenship, it does not permit any of its members, either in Lodge or in their capacity as Freemasons, to discuss theological or political questions.

It offers no pecuniary advantages binding one Mason to deal with another, or to support him in any way in the ordinary business relations of life.

It has certain charities, but is in no sense whatever a 'benefit society', nor is it based on any calculations which would render this possible. The charities are solely for those who, having been in good circumstances, have been overtaken by misfortune or adversity. Neither a Mason, his wife, nor his children have any claim upon it.

Masonry teaches that a man's first claim is to himself, his wife, his family and his connections. No one should join the Order who cannot well afford to pay the Initiates Fees and subscriptions to his Lodge as well as to the Masonic charities, and this without detriment to the comfort and well-being of those who have any claim on his support.

Therefore everyone, before offering himself as a Candidate, should be well assured in his own mind that:-

- (a) he sincerely desires the intellectual and moral improvement of himself and his fellow creatures
- (b) he is willing to devote part of his time, his means, and his effort in the promotion of Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth
- (c) he seeks no commercial, social or pecuniary advantages
- (d) he is able to afford the necessary expenditure without injury to himself or his connections.

THE MASONIC CHAIN

(The Brethren form a circle around the Dining Room with arms outstretched, but NOT crossed. The Brother's hands clasp the hand of the Brother next but one to him on either side.)

Brother Initiate. You will observe that with open arms we receive you into Freemasonry - into this Lodge - and into the hearts of the Brethren of this Masonic circle.

You will note that a Brother's arms cross the breasts of those next to him on either side symbolising the protection that Brother gives to Brother from the attacks of the insidious when the need arises.

You will notice that each Brother's arms reach beyond his immediate neighbour symbolising the far reaching nature of Masonic help.

The chain, thus formed, is symbolical of our Order. It is a double chain and therefore is doubly strong and has a double meaning:-

First - it shows the manner in which the Initiate is received into Freemasonry. All the Brethren receive him into the circle which has no end. The Initiate is grasping the hand of the Immediate Past Master across the breast of the Worshipful Master. The Initiate is the future, the Worshipful Master the present and the Immediate Past Master, the past; thus the past looks through the present to the future to see the continuance of its work.

Secondly - because the chain is a double one, should it so happen that a link is broken by the G.A.O.T.U. calling a Brother to the G.L.A., the Chain remains strong and unbroken by reason of the other links, but a weakness remains until that link is replaced by a new Brother. To-night, Brother Initiate, you are the new link and may you remain strong and unbroken until you in turn receive your summons to the G.L.A.

Part of the construction of all chains consists of testing from time to time to see that it is strong enough to withstand the strain required of it; it is therefore tested in excess of the normal strain. So is our Masonic Chain tested. This is suggested by the gentle swaying motion of the Brethren, the swaying without breaking symbolises the strength of the Brotherhood.

REGALIA

1. Entered Apprentice and Fellowship Regalia are loaned by the Lodge and should not be taken away without leave of the Master.
2. Master Masons are required to purchase their own regalia. This can be done through the Tyler or personally from one of the manufacturers. If a Brother desires to obtain his regalia independent of the Tyler he should inform the Secretary.
3. Regalia should under no circumstances be left at the Masonic Hall.
4. On appointment to an 'Acting' rank in Provincial Grand Lodge the insignia of office is provided by the Provincial Grand Secretary. When a Brother ceases to hold 'acting' rank or is appointed to Past Rank he is responsible for providing his own insignia of office. All other Masonic clothing must be provided by the Brother in readiness for the Installation at Provincial Grand Lodge in September.
5. Regalia must not be worn in public or on non-Masonic occasions without approval of the Provincial Grand Master.
6. Past Masters should provide themselves with a Past Masters collar which should be worn on all Masonic occasions until attaining Provincial Rank, thereafter Provincial clothing will be worn.
7. A Brother deputising for an Officer is NOT entitled to wear the collar of that Office.
8. Jewels of Royal Arch Masonry should be worn by those Brethren entitled to do so.

BADGES OF RANK

A full description of Badges of Rank and other regalia, together with designs, can be found in the Appendix to the Book of Constitutions.

OTHER MASONIC ORGANISATIONS

LODGE OF INSTRUCTION

There is a Lodge of Instruction attached to the Merston Culy Lodge to which all Master Masons are cordially invited.

It meets at the Stechford Masonic Hall on the third Friday in each month, September to April inclusive. A Festival is normally held in May.

The Lodge of Instruction is under the direction of a very experienced Past Master. It provides an excellent training in Masonic ritual, procedure and etiquette and is commended to Brethren seeking advancement in Masonic knowledge.

The Preceptor or Secretary of the Lodge of Instruction will be pleased to give any further information.

ROYAL ARCH MASONRY

A Master Mason who desires to further his interests in Freemasonry may make application for membership of the Holy Royal Arch.

There is no Royal Arch Chapter attached to the Merston Culy Lodge, but many of our Brethren are members in either Warwickshire or Worcestershire and they would be pleased to supply any information on this subject. Please contact the Lodge Secretary and he will make the necessary arrangements for you to meet one of our Royal Arch Brethren.

WORCESTERSHIRE PROVINCIAL LIBRARY AND MUSEUM

There is an excellent Library and Museum at the Masonic Hall, Rainbow Hill, Worcester, which is available to all Brethren. Books may be borrowed free of charge and a list of those available can be obtained from the Lodge Library and Museum representative.

ASSOCIATED MASONIC LODGES

Lodges in a Province are divided into Groups - at present there are 13 in Worcestershire - Merston Culy is in Group 8. So far as is practicable a group consists of not less than 3 and not more than 8 Lodges. Each Lodge is represented on the Group by the Master and 3 elected Brethren.

The function of the Groups is to promote the interest of Freemasonry in general and in our case, Worcestershire in particular and to make various recommendations to Provincial Grand Lodge.

Representatives are elected from the Groups to serve on the Provincial Committee, known as the Worcestershire Associated Masonic Lodges.

FINANCE

SUBSCRIPTIONS

The present subscription is £7.7.0d. annually which includes dues to Grand Lodge and Provincial Grand Lodge and the cost of dining, but it does NOT include wines at dinner.

The Lodge year commences on July 1st when the subscription becomes due, and terminates on June 30th. A Brother desirous of terminating his membership must tender his resignation in writing or orally in open Lodge, and is required to pay the full year's subscription for the financial year in which he resigns.

NON-DINING MEMBERS

A Brother may become a non-dining member on payment of a subscription of £2.2.0d. per year if:-

- (a) he resides more than 20 miles from Stechford Masonic Hall, or
- (b) that there are, in the opinion of the Lodge, special circumstances which merit this concession.

He is entitled to all the rights and privileges of the Lodge. When dining he will be responsible for the dining fee appropriate to a visiting Brother.

DINING FEES

The Dining Fee is subject to fluctuation and shall be such as the Lodge shall from time to time determine by resolution of the Lodge. Wines are paid for separately.

Brethren inviting guests are responsible for their dining fees.

The Master is entitled to 4 guests free of charge at his Installation and two of all other meetings. Provincial Officers and other distinguished guests of the Lodge attending in an Official capacity are paid for from Lodge Funds.

DEFAULT IN PAYMENT OF SUBSCRIPTIONS

The financial year ends on the 30th June. Brethren who are 3 years in arrears of subscriptions shall cease to be members of the Lodge and in accordance with Rule 127 of the Book of Constitution shall not be permitted to attend any Lodge or Lodge of Instruction until they become subscribing members of a Lodge.

INITIATES FEES

The Initiates Fee is £30, plus part of the annual subscription, the amount is calculated on the unexpired period of the Session in which he is initiated. He also pays for his Master Mason's apron at the appropriate time.

From the Initiation Fees of £30, the Lodge pay £10.10.0d. to the Masonic Hall Co. towards the maintenance and improvement of the building, £1.10.0d. to Grand Lodge and 10/- to Provincial Grand Lodge. It will, therefore, be seen that the net amount receivable by the Lodge is comparatively small.

JOINING MEMBERS

The Joining Fee is £10.0.0d. plus part of the annual subscription as in the case of an Initiate. From this amount, dues are payable to Grand Lodge and Provincial Grand Lodge.

ELECTION OF TREASURER

The Treasurer is elected by ballot at the regular Lodge Meeting in April each year.

PRESENTATION OF BALANCE SHEETS

The Balance Sheets of the General Account and the Charity Account are presented annually at the October meeting.

AUDITORS

Two auditors are elected annually in April. They are responsible for the two accounts referred to above.

INSURANCE

The Lodge insures Brethren against injury or damage to property whilst carrying out their duties at the Stechford Masonic Hall. The insurance covers loss by fire or theft under certain circumstances. Any Brother who may wish to make a claim in respect of these matters should communicate with the Treasurer.

CHARITY COLLECTIONS, ETC.

This is the responsibility of the Charity Steward, and details will be found under the heading 'Charity Organisations'.

MASONIC ETIQUETTE

1. Grand Lodge Certificates should not be publicly displayed.
2. A Brother must be properly clothed with the badge of his rank before he can be admitted to a Lodge Meeting.
3. Topics of religious or political nature are to be avoided on all Masonic occasions. Failure to do so may disturb the harmony of the Lodge.
4. When speaking in Lodge, a Brother must remain standing and address himself to the Master whose decision on all points of order must be strictly observed and respected.
5. Prompting by a visiting Brother during the ceremonial, unless specifically asked to do so, is a breach of etiquette.
6. Masonic business of whatever nature must not be discussed with those who are unconnected with our Order, neither should a Brother publicize his membership of the fraternity.
7. Proposers and responders to toasts should ensure that their speeches contain nothing which could remotely be described as offensive to others, lacking in taste or which may have a tendency to lower the standard of the proceedings or the dignity of Freemasonry.
8. On all Masonic occasions the Master must be addressed by his rank. To address him by name leads to a loss of dignity for his Office and is an infringement of etiquette.

9. Whilst the Lodge does not wish to enforce upon the Brethren any particular dress to be worn on Masonic occasions, it should be such as to maintain the dignity of the occasion. Dark suits, white shirts, black ties and white gloves are suggested as suitable attire.
10. The Master may, at his discretion, refuse admission to any Brother whose presence would, in his opinion, disturb the harmony of the Lodge.
11. A Brother entering a Lodge after it has been opened should salute in all the Degrees up to and including that in which it is then working. A Brother may leave without permission and should salute in the particular Degree on his retiring. Should he re-enter he will again give the salute in the appropriate Degree.
12. Masonic Jewels should be worn on all Masonic occasions by those entitled to do so, which includes the Royal Arch Jewel. Civil and military decorations are not permitted.
13. Failure to reply promptly to an invitation to attend a Lodge meeting is an act of discourtesy to the host and causes serious inconvenience to the Lodge Secretary. Many Lodges insist on at least three days notice of acceptance.

PROVINCIAL GRAND LODGE

The function of Provincial Grand Lodge is to supervise and encourage the work of Masonry and to assist Lodges within its area, which, generally speaking, corresponds to County Boundaries.

It has no control over the internal administration of a Lodge providing that it conforms to the rules of the fraternity as laid down in the Book of Constitution.

It is comprised of:-

(a) Provincial Grand Master

He is appointed by the Most Worshipful The Grand Master, is not subject to annual election, and the appointment need not necessarily be made from amongst the Brethren in the particular Province.

(b) Deputy Provincial Grand Master

He is appointed by the Provincial Grand Master and is not elected annually.

(c) Assistant Provincial Grand Master(s)

This appointment is also at the discretion of the Provincial Grand Master who may have additional Assistants for every 50 Lodges.

(d) Other Ranks

There are other Provincial ranks which are set out in the Book of Constitution. The Provincial Grand Treasurer and Provincial Grand Tyler are elected, the remainder are appointed by the Provincial Grand Master at the Provincial Grand Lodge Annual Meeting held each year in September to which Brethren are invited. The numbers attending from each Lodge are recorded. The Provincial Grand Secretary and Provincial Grand Tyler are remunerated for their services. The number of appointments which a Provincial Grand Master can make annually is governed by the number of Lodges in his Province.

Provincial Officers are normally appointed from the Past Masters, but Provincial rank can, and often is, conferred on Brethren irrespective of their Lodge rank as an acknowledgement of their services to Freemasonry.

INSIGNIAS OF OFFICE

These are set out as an Appendix in the Book of Constitution where the designs are fully explained.

DUTIES OF PROVINCIAL OFFICERS

The duties of the senior Officers are too varied and numerous to set out in detail, even if it were possible to do so. However, special reference should be made to the fact that in Worcestershire one or more attend every Installation Meeting and when one considers there are over 100 Lodges this is no small achievement and the Lodge is appreciative of the honour which their visits confer.

Less senior Officers appointed during the year attend Lodge meetings in the Province as the representatives of the Provincial Grand Master, each being assigned to at least one. They attend other Masonic Provincial functions in their official capacity, e.g. Masonic Service, Consecration of Lodges, etc., as required.

MASONIC SERVICE

A Masonic Service is held annually on the second Sunday in July at Worcester Cathedral. All Brethren and their friends, whether Masonic or otherwise, are invited. Regalia is worn by the Brethren.

LONDON GRAND RANK

There are no Provincial Grand Lodges in the London area, consequently there is no Provincial Grand Rank, the equivalent is that of 'London Grand Rank'. The holders of this rank are not distinguished by insignias of Wardens, Deacons, etc., as in Provincial Grand Lodges. The regalia is in all other respects similar to that of their Provincial Brethren.

MASONIC CHARITY ORGANISATIONS

There are 4 main Charity Organisations and the Royal Masonic Hospital under the direct control of the United Grand Lodge of England.

- (a) Royal Masonic Institution for Girls
- (b) Royal Masonic Institution for Boys
- (c) Royal Masonic Benevolent Institution
- (d) Benevolent Fund of Grand Lodge
- (a) Royal Masonic Institution for Girls

The Girls School was founded in 1788 to accommodate 15 girls. The School has moved to larger premises on 5 occasions since that date. A new School was built at Rickmansworth and opened in 1934. It accommodates 400 pupils.

A Junior School, accommodating 100 girls between the ages of 8 and 10 years is at Weybridge, Surrey.

The School, which provides a first class education, can be visited by a Brother by appointment. In addition to educating the pupils, it provides clothing and holiday money for the 500 daughters of deceased Brethren in its care. Grants are made to girls of exceptional ability to enable them to continue their studies for professions, etc., at Universities and elsewhere. Since its foundation over 11,000 girls have been cared for by the School.

Financial assistance is also given towards the maintenance and education of girls who are non-resident.

- (b) Royal Masonic Institution for Boys

This was founded in 1798 when six boys received assistance from the Institution.

In 1808 a similar institution was founded by the members of the Royal Naval Lodge.

In 1817 the two merged and in 1857 the first School was built. The present School at Bushey was built in 1900, the junior school being added in 1929 and now accommodates 600 boys.

The objects of the Institution are similar in every respect to that of the Royal Masonic Institution for Girls with the addition that in the case of boys assistance is given to ex pupils and those receiving out-education in establishing themselves in a career. This particularly applies to those boys under Article or service apprenticeships where their remuneration is usually too small for their essential needs.

(c) Royal Masonic Benevolent Institution

In 1838 a small annuity was paid to a few aged Freemasons in need and in 1850 the first Home was built at Croydon. There are now 4 homes for aged Freemasons, their widows, spinster daughters and spinster sisters at Hove, Oadby (Leicestershire), Cramlington (Northumberland), Chislehurst (Kent).

The Institution is providing for over 2,000 annuities annually at a full rate of £180 for married Brethren, and £120 for others, the majority of whom reside in their own homes.

The Institution's Harewood Court Home, Hove, accommodates 100 residents, each with a small flat, rent, heating and fuel free of charge and an annuity. The remaining Homes, in addition to providing for annuitants, will also accommodate those who are able to make some contribution towards their maintenance.

(d) Benevolent Fund of Grand Lodge

This is somewhat different in application than the three Funds which have preceded it.

The Funds are derived from an annual levy on every subscribing member and is paid by his Lodge from his subscription.

No Brother can receive any benefit from this Fund unless he has paid the full Initiation Fees and/or Joining Fees, has been a member of a Lodge for 5 years and that the Lodge has paid dues in respect of his membership. A Brother who ceases to subscribe for 20 years immediately preceding his application for relief is not entitled to assistance unless he has previously subscribed for 15 years or upwards. The Board may, however, exercise its discretion if it can be proved to its satisfaction that physical incapacity has prevented him from so doing.

The Board may grant relief to a Brother, his widow and children under the age of 21 years.

National and International Appeals for help in the relief of distress and to alleviate suffering as the result of some major catastrophe receive the sympathetic consideration of the Board.

ROYAL MASONIC HOSPITAL

This has developed over the past 40 years and has 270 beds for the benefit of Freemasons, their wives and dependant children at Ravenscourt Park, London. It was opened in 1933 and extended in 1958. The Nurses Home was opened in 1938.

There is a Convalescent Home at Frinton-on-Sea with 14 beds.

PROVINCIAL CHARITY ORGANISATION

Its function is to co-ordinate the collection, application and administration of funds raised within the Province in support of the Girls, Boys and Benevolent Institutions and the Royal Masonic Hospital by which means an equitable flow of funds find their way to the Institutions.

It is administered by a Committee on which each Lodge is represented by the Charity Stewards and one other Brother who is elected annually.

PROVINCIAL BENEVOLENT FUND

This fund provides financial assistance to necessitous Freemasons, their widows, and in the maintenance and education of their children. This fund caters for those cases which may not be eligible for help from other Masonic sources.

WILLIAM PAGE MEMORIAL FUND

This is a Trust Fund to perpetuate the memory of the late W.Bro. V.L. Page, Deputy Provincial Grand Master. It is administered in a similar manner to the Provincial Benevolent Fund, but assistance is given in the form of annuities.

MERSTON CULY LODGE EMERGENCY FUND

This fund was inaugurated for the purpose of providing immediate assistance to Brethren of Merston Culy Lodge, their widows or dependant children as a temporary measure until assistance can be given by one or more of the Funds referred to above.

ANNUAL COST OF FINANCING THE INSTITUTIONS

Royal Masonic Institution for Girls	- £420,000 approx.
Royal Masonic Institution for Boys	- £400,000 approx.
Royal Masonic Benevolent Institution	- £280,000 approx.

Total - £1,100,000 approximately

HOW THE FINANCE IS RAISED, AND METHODS BY WHICH THE BRETHREN CAN SUBSCRIBE

£135,000 is received as interest on invested capital in respect of the Royal Masonic Institution for Girls, and £100,000 in respect of the Royal Masonic Institution for Boys. The Royal Masonic Benevolent Institution also receives interest on investments.

It will, therefore, be seen that less than one fifth of the annual income is derived from this source, and the Institutions rely on the generosity of the Brethren to subscribe the balance to maintain this invaluable work.

Finance in support of the Institutions is received by a number of means, principally by the following:-

(a) Subscriptions

Paying a full subscription by a single payment. A subscription of £10.10.0d. qualifies a Brother for a Stewardship of the Institution of his choice.

(b) Coventant System

By this means a Brother agrees to pay a specified sum annually for 7 years. By this means Income Tax paid on the amount he subscribes is recoverable from the Inland Revenue, thus ensuring an additional financial benefit to the Institution. The position regarding Stewardships is as referred to above.

(c) Tontine System

This is a system whereby a Brother pays an annual subscription of £2.2.0d. for 5 years, a total of £10.10.0d.

It is suggested that Brethren consider this and form themselves into a syndicate of 5, each paying £2.2.0d. per year, and the £10.10.0d. subscribed by them in the aggregate being submitted to a particular Institution of their choice. This would be sent annually in the name of one of the Brethren who would then qualify for a Stewardship, the method of selecting the Brother being by ballot. By this means each of the 5 Brethren in turn will qualify for Stewardships.

(d) Collections at Masonic and non-Masonic Functions

This is applied universally. The proceeds do not qualify for Stewardships.

(e) Larger Subscriptions

Subscriptions of £52.10.0d. qualify the donor as a Vice-President, £105.0.0d. as Vice Patron and £210.0.0d. as Patron.

PRIVILEGES OF STEWARDSHIPS

A Brother who personally subscribes £10.10.0d. to a particular Institution is termed a 'Steward'.

He is entitled to attend the Festival of the Institution in that particular year on payment of a dining fee and he receives a Stewards Jewel which he is qualified to wear on all Masonic occasions during the year of issue. In certain circumstances, Grand Lodge may designate it a 'permanent Jewel' which entitles the holder to wear without a time qualification.

The ribbons are coloured:-

White	- Royal Masonic Institution for Girls
Blue	- Royal Masonic Institution for Boys
Red	- Royal Masonic Benevolent Institution

A Brother who has served a Stewardship in a second Institution by subscribing £10.10.0d. to it, not necessarily in the same year as the first, qualifies for the Grand Lodge Charity Jewel, the ribbon being the colours of the two Institutions. Similarly, a subscription to the third Institution entitles him to a Jewel with tri-colour ribbon. The subscribers name is engraved on the Jewel.

ANNUAL INCOME

It is of interest to note that the collection for the Royal Masonic Institution for Girls when founded in 1789 was £82. This has consistently increased and in 1965 was no less than £183,565.

In 1806 the collection for the Royal Masonic Institution for Boys was £33. In 1965 it was £418,000.

ROYAL MASONIC HOSPITAL

Contributions by patients help to defray the cost of the Hospital and is based on their ability to pay and is adjusted to their circumstances. Patients unable to pay the minimum are assisted from a Fund set apart for that purpose. It will, therefore, be seen that the hospital is partially self-supporting, but additional financial help is needed.

Qualifications of individual donors are:-

Patron	- £52.10. 0d.
Vice-Patron	- £26. 5. 0d.
Life Governor	- £10.10. 0d.
Life Subscriber	- £ 5. 5. 0d.

In the case of the Royal Masonic Hospital ALL donations, large or small, count and accrue towards these qualifications.

INSTITUTION FESTIVALS

The Royal Masonic Institutions for Girls and Boys and the Royal Masonic Benevolent each hold an annual Festival which is in effect the culmination of the efforts of the Brethren to raise the necessary income for their maintenance.

The privilege of presiding at the Festival is accorded to each Province in rotation. The Provincial Grand Master for Worcestershire will preside at the Royal Masonic Institution for Boys' Festival in 1969.

These are held in the Girls School, Rickmansworth, on the second Wednesday in May, the Boys School, Bushey, on the first Wednesday in June, and the Benevolent Institution at Freemasons Hall on the fourth Wednesday in February, at which all holders of Stewardships are entitled to attend.

SUBSCRIPTIONS BY LADIES AND LEWISES

Ladies and Lewises (being minors) receive and are eligible for the same privileges and qualifications on payment of one half the subscription applicable to Brethren with a minimum of £5 5 0d.

SOCIAL FUNCTIONS

LADIES EVENINGS

These functions are held entirely at the discretion of the Master who may, if he so desires, dispense with a Ladies Evening during his year in the chair. The date is decided by the Master, but it has been the practice for many years to hold the function on the second Saturday in May.

LADIES INFORMAL EVENINGS

This is also a matter for the Master's discretion. No financial assistance is provided from Lodge Funds for this or the formal Ladies Evening.

MERSTON CULY GOLFING COMPETITION

A Golf Cup was presented to the Lodge in 1951. It is competed for annually. The winner retains it for one year and is responsible for the insurance fee which is payable to the Secretary or Treasurer.

WORCESTERSHIRE MASONIC GOLFING SOCIETY

The object of this is to promote the competitive spirit of golfing amongst masons in the Worcestershire Province and to raise funds for Masonic charities. Further details can be obtained from the Secretary of the Lodge.

WORCESTERSHIRE MASONIC BOWLING ASSOCIATION

The objects of this Association are to provide facilities for the game of bowls, to arrange matches with other Masonic Provinces and to raise funds for Masonic charities. The Lodge Secretary will be pleased to supply details.

VISITS TO MASONIC INSTITUTIONS AND PLACES OF INTEREST

Visits are arranged from time to time to the Royal Masonic School for Boys, Royal Masonic School for Girls, Homes for Aged Masons, Masonic Buildings at Great Queen Street, London, the Worcestershire Provincial Library and Museum at Worcester, etc.

Ladies are invited to participate in many of these social functions.

The Master welcomes any suggestions which a Brother may wish to make in the interests of the social or recreational side of the Lodge activities.