



**STANE STREET LODGE
8648**

**MENTORING
THE WAY FORWARD**

Before reading this document please bear in mind an important point emphasized by The Most Worshipful Grand Master in his address to Grand Lodge in March 2009:

".....that it does not matter how much mentoring we give to a new member, after he has been initiated, if we don't ensure all candidates for initiation have a proper understanding before they join of what we expect of them, and indeed, what they can expect from us. If all of us get that right and we look after them properly after they are members, then we will lose far fewer members in their early years and have a much more enlightened and satisfied membership".

This formed the basis of basis and need Mentoring. It was the loss of members in their early years and the need for Mentoring in later years. It is best if we remember that Mentoring was designed to complement Freemasonry not to rule it.

However saying that it is important to note that in this current crisis we need to be more positive and use the tools available to us such as Skype, Zoom, Teams and WhatsApp to engage with the brethren and give them confidence that we shall overcome this crisis as we have in the past.

Notes from the Master (2018) W. Bro Graham Watkins.

As Master, I feel that it is essential to address the growing feeling within MetGL, the Provinces and our own Lodge, that it is essential to introduce a dedicated Mentoring Scheme to help develop New Masons and enhance the enjoyment of more experienced Masons and retain Masons that we would lose through lack of interest or understanding of the Craft.

This I feel must begin in the time before the Candidates' Interviews, and progress through their early years, but not forgetting that we have Masons in senior positions who may also need help and guidance. This is obviously my personal opinion and I would not force this on the Lodge, but rather would form a committee to move ideas forward after discussions.

To that end, and because we are a Private lodge, we need to develop our own strategy based on the needs of SS8648 for the coming years to enhance the experience of our Brothers generally, make it enjoyable and fun, but without imposing onerous conditions that would be unacceptable in current times. This will in turn develop a stronger Lodge, bond and pride and enhance what can be achieved by individuals.

Because it was obvious from previous committee meetings that various different views were surfacing, some based on documents that were originally produced to generate discussions in the pre-mentoring stages, and some based on what Province and MetGL would like to see, I do feel that this matter needs addressing properly and fairly with the harmony that all Freemasons should maintain in their lifestyle.

The by-laws give powers to the Lodge Committee, to report to the Lodge on matters that they are directed to deal with. To that end a Special Committee should be formed to address Mentoring. and put forward to the Lodge a proposal for approval that will benefit the Lodge over the next 10 years.

The makeup of this committee should be agreed at the next committee meeting and regular meetings agreed to deal with specific proposals.

That committee, if formed, needs a brief from the Lodge committee and suggest the following be a starting point:-

1. The committee shall ensure that the members of the SS8648 Lodge are informed of the intentions of Province and Grand Lodge in the instigation of a fully tailored mentoring system, and the position and duties of the mentoring coordinator (Lodge Mentor) and personal mentors within the Lodge, complying with the Book of Constitutions and By-Laws.
2. The committee shall consult with members of the SS8648 Lodge about what their needs are regarding succession planning, development and mentoring.
3. Ascertain if there is likely to be sufficient demand for a mentoring system
4. Ascertain who would benefit from and would be willing to be mentored
5. Ascertain those members that would be willing and have the time to be mentors
6. After taking into account the information revealed from the research, recommend a system that will work for SS8648 Lodge, and submit that for approval in open Lodge.
7. Monitor the mentoring system and revise as necessary on a regular basis and report to the Lodge Committee at each meeting.

There needs to be a starting point for the above and I would suggest that we do this by agreeing what system we want, and would propose for the initial discussion it be based on that proposed by Provinces with Mentor Coordinator and Personal Mentors which should be defined as follows:-

Mentor Coordinator (MC)/Lodge Mentor (LM) - (No Difference)

The mentor coordinator should be an experienced Mason and be a person who ensures that structured mentoring takes place. He is the 'organizer' and is not required to act as a personal mentor.

To quote the Pro Grand Master:

'For the avoidance of doubt the lodge Mentor is responsible for coordinating and selecting suitable Brethren to be Personal Mentors. It is most certainly not the intention that the lodge Mentor should carry out the task himself.'

The committee needs to agree the actual duties, responsibilities and powers that will be conferred on this person when appointed and how that person reports and to whom.

Suggestions and Considerations

1. That person should head a team (committee) of people to use as mentors in order that the Brother receives tailored mentoring appropriate to his needs.
2. That mentoring be instigated by the request of the Brother and not be imposed.
3. The Brother's need is identified at an early stage by Succession Planning.
4. That reports in writing be given to the Secretary and considered at committee meetings not discussed in open Lodge.
5. That mentoring reports and requirements be logged with the Secretary and kept within the Brothers personal files.

Personal Mentor (PM)

The personal mentor should be a suitably experienced and appropriate Master Mason who is willing to be assigned to a Brother as his Personal Mentor.

It is important that the Mentee is in agreement to the appointment of a Personal Mentor and that this is not imposed upon him, and that person acts as or is a friend and guide.

The committee needs to agree the actual duties, responsibilities and powers that will be conferred on this person when appointed, and how that person reports to the Mentor Coordinator.

Suggestions and Considerations

- 1) The personal mentor (PM) shall meet with his mentee on a regular basis and ascertain his needs.
- 2) The PM shall report to the DC/Sec/W/M with recommendations for work within ceremonies that the mentee would be capable and willing to undertake.
- 3) The PM will make recommendations for progression bearing in mind rule 104 of the Book of Constitutions.
- 4) The mentee will have the ability to decide if and when he requires further mentoring without notice.
- 5) It is hoped that the Proposer or Secunder will act as a PM during the time the Brother is undertaking his 3 degrees and report to the MC on completion to appoint a new PM or continue with the position if capable.

I have prepared this paper for discussion purposes only, to be a starting point to enable thought to be given to the important task ahead and to show to Province that we are actively considering the best way forward for the Stane Street Lodge 8648, in the retaining and advancement of the Brethren.

Where does mentoring start and finish? It should be divided in to 5 sections:

- 1) Prior to interview - Personal Mentor to be available for the interview (proposer or secunder).
- 2) Personal Mentor available at ceremonies 1st 2nd and 3rd.
- 3) Post Master Mason Mentoring from 1/G to W/M with a structured learning programme for advancement.
- 4) Later life Mentoring, turning the Mentee into the Mentor.
- 5) Looking at the Master leaving the Chair and the void formed at that time.

INTERIM MENTORING MEASURES - Candidate for Initiation

- 1) Each candidate for initiation will be appointed a temporary mentor.
- 2) The Mentor will introduce himself to the candidate prior to initiation.
- 3) He will stay with the candidate while being prepared for initiation to put the candidate at his ease.
- 4) He will leave with the new brother after initiation and explain the ceremony or leave him with a written explanation that I will provide, and briefly explain the 1st Degree book that must be provided after the meeting.
- 5) We should purchase copies of Emulation Working Today by Graham Redman or similar to be given to the Candidate on initiation.
- 6) The brother should be also given a copy of the by-laws and book of constitutions.
- 7) He will go through the signs with him and make sure he is happy and aware that he will need to show this sign on re-entering.
- 8) He will enter the Lodge and take his seat prior to the new brother returning and will be sat with him.
- 9) He will keep in contact with the new brother during the period following the initiation and invite him to attend L of I and, if possible, meet him at L of I, or appoint someone who is attending to look after him.
- 10) After the meeting he will be requested by an invoice from the treasurer to pay his initiation fee and subscription, which he should be aware of prior to initiation by a letter from either the Secretary or Treasurer (approved wording required) (note 1).
- 11) He should be made aware that he is required to respond to a toast at the festive board and the starting words required in the response, and given a history of the Lodge. (See note 2)

Notes:

- 1) We have a situation that brother did not pay his initiation or 1st year subscriptions. This is process that should never happen again.
- 2) This could be given in the letter confirming his Ballot and subsequent imitation if approved. I have a copy of one that has been used previously if you require, but I am sure that we can produce one for the OM2700 use only.

INTERIM MENTORING MEASURES - Candidate for Passing

- 1) The temporary Mentor at initiation will now be appointed the PM if that is agreeable to the candidate for passing.
- 2) The PM will go through the passing questions and answers and only when he is happy that the candidate is proficient in these will the passing proceed (*This is where there is a chance the Candidate could suffer embarrassment if he is not able to perform this well, and a possible time that we could lose a brother*).
- 3) The PM will leave with the candidate after the passwords while being prepared for the passing, making sure he is happy with the Password and its meaning.
- 4) The PM will re-enter the Lodge prior to the return of the Candidate.
- 5) The candidate will undergo the passing and the PM will leave with him with him and make sure he is aware of the signs required on his return. The PM will give a brief explanation of the ceremony and give the candidate a copy of the 2nd Degree book and take away the 1st Degree book.
- 6) The PM will re-enter the Lodge and take his seat prior to the brother.
- 7) The Brother returns for the tracing board and is then seated with his PM.
- 8) The Brother should be made aware that there is a 3rd Degree and more questions and answers required.

INTERIM MENTORING MEASURES - Candidate for Raising

- 1) The PM should meet the candidate at least a week before the raising, to talk through, the questions and answers, and only when proficient will the raising be booked (*for reasons previously discussed*).
- 2) The PM will leave with the candidate while he is being prepared to make sure he is happy with the password and the meaning.
- 3) The PM will re-enter the Lodge before the candidate.
- 4) The candidate will undergo the raising and the PM will leave with him to make sure he understands what has gone on and the signs given and required on return. The PM will return when he is happy that this has been done.
- 5) The brother returns for the traditional history and after is seated with his PM.

INTERIM MENTORING DURING COVID-19 LOCKDOWN & ZOOM MEETINGS **(2020 & 2021)**

- 1) A list of current subscribing members who wish to undertake personal mentoring (learning) should be identified and should include brethren progressing a Lodge Officers.
- 2) A list of experienced Past Masters to act as personal Mentors should be identified.
- 3) A tailored list of learning should be agreed in the Lodge specific to the Lodge i.e. The Inner Guard should learn his duties and that of the Junior warden in all three degrees and be able to display these at a Zoom Meeting (excluding any passwords or items within the Blue Book that are in prohibited from public participation)
- 4) Each Brother wanting to learn should have a personal tutor appointed to work through his specific learning program, and they should both agree when they are ready to display at a Zoom meeting.
- 5) Personal Mentors and Mentees Zoom meetings on a Monthly basis not exceeding 1 hour
- 6) The Zoom meetings on a Monthly basis, should be divided into three sections of 20 minutes each
(1) General get together, Reports & Membership / (2) Learning Display / (3) Raffle or Quiz.
- 7) Breakout rooms could be considered depending on the feeling of the Lodge at any time.
- 8) Calling of ZOOM meetings will be in as many formats as possible as follows: -
 - a) WhatsApp, SMS, Facetime, Teams, Skype, or whatever format is agreed
 - b) Email – Since this reached the most members this should be done in a diary format which gives the ability to the brother to respond either with Decline, Accept or Maybe
 - c) Phone where there is a problem with receipt of emails.
- 9) Lodge agreement would be required but not in open Lodge.

Attachments:

- 1) Interview 20 questions
- 2) Initiation check list
- 3) Progress Planning
- 4) Satisfaction survey
- 5) Mentoring Record Sheet
- 6) Absence tracking
- 7) Introducing candidate to Personal Mentor
- 8) Mentors Record sheet
- 9) Mentors Report

Additional Attachments:

1. Leadership in Freemasonry
2. Stress free Ritual

Interviewing Potential Candidates - 20 Essential Questions

The process of interviewing a potential candidate should be as stress free and as comfortable as possible for the interviewee. It should ensure that he is suitable to become a Freemason and that his membership will not cause any difficulties either at home or in his business life.

The committee room should be arranged so that the interviewee sits next to the Worshipful Master, making him feel part of the group. The interview is not an interrogation and everything should be done to avoid it seeming to be such.

The first need is to put the candidate at ease. The easiest way to achieve that is to get him to talk about the subject he knows best ... himself.

1. Can you tell us something about yourself.... for instance, are you married or in a relationship?
2. Do you have a family?
3. What do you do for a living?
4. Are any of your family Freemasons?
5. Do you have any friends who are Freemasons?
6. Are you involved in any way with charities or your local community?

Next we need to establish that membership of the Lodge is not going to cause any domestic difficulties.

7. Have you discussed with your wife or partner your desire to become a freemason?
8. How does she feel about this?
9. Charitable giving is a central part of Freemasonry? Are you aware that you will be asked to contribute on a regular basis?
10. Have you been advised of the cost of joining, the annual subscription, dining fees and the cost of regalia?
11. Can you meet these costs without detriment to yourself or your family?
12. We have regular Lodge Meetings four times a year, and hold a Lodge of Instruction on a Saturday afternoon in the months of January, April, October and November. Would you be able to attend on a regular basis?

The next series of questions are designed to ensure that he is qualified to become a member.

13. Do you believe in a God?
14. Why do you want to become a Freemason?
15. What do you expect to gain from being a Freemason?
16. What do you think you can contribute to the Lodge were you to be accepted as a member?
17. Have you ever applied to join any other Lodge?
18. Do you have a criminal record?

We now need to invite the members of the Lodge Committee to ask any supplementary questions they may have.

19. Does any member have a question that they would like to put to Mr _____?

And finally, we need to invite the Candidate to ask any questions he may wish to ask.

20. Are there any questions you would like to put to this committee, or is there any other information you would like to have?

At this point the Interviewee should be asked to retire and his proposer *or* seconder should accompany him.

If the Lodge Committee is in favour of accepting the interviewee as a candidate, a Form P should be issued and the Interviewee should be advised of the decision.

If the Committee decides that he is **not** a suitable candidate, then he should be advised that the Secretary will contact him with the committee's decision in a few days. His Proposer and Secunder should be informed, and the candidate advised in writing of the reasons for the Committee's decision as soon as possible.

Initiation- A Check List for Proposers & Mentors

The night of a new Mason's Initiation into our Fraternity is one of the most important in his life. It is an occasion which he will never forget.., hopefully for all the right reasons!

It is the shared nature of the event that makes it special, so it is important to stress to your charge the fact that everyone present in the room will have experienced the same feelings, fears and uncertainties that he might be feeling and that for that reason they are all very much on his side.

One of the ways you can help to reduce stress and help him to enjoy the occasion is to get him *properly* prepared, both mentally and physically, for the big day. Spend some time explaining to him what he can expect to happen on the night, and what is expected of him. However, do not spoil the ceremony or lessen its impact by telling him too much about it in advance.

The following checklist will help you ensure that all goes smoothly:

Punctuality:

Make him aware that the membership of the whole lodge and its visitors will be let down if he does not arrive in plenty of time. The Secretary, Treasurer and Junior Deacon Will all need to spend time with him before the meeting, so aim to get him there at least 40 minutes before the meeting is scheduled to start. Giving him a lift to the Centre is a nice touch and serves the dual purpose of ensuring he arrives in good time.

Dress:

Be sure to tell him well in advance of the meeting what he is expected to wear

- A dark Lounge suit (Black/Dark Grey/Dark Blue).
- A long-sleeved white shirt with no vest or T-shirt underneath.
- A plain black tie. (He should not wear either the Craft tie or the Metropolitan tie until after he has been initiated).
- Black Shoes and plain black socks with no holes in them!
- No Belt with a metal buckle.
- You should warn him that he will need to remove his watch and ALL jewelry, including even his wedding ring before entering the Lodge.

Alcohol:

Whilst a wee dram for courage is understandable, moderation is essential on this very special evening. This also applies during festive board, where too much wine will badly effect the manner in which he responds to the toast to the Initiate.

Toast to the Initiate:

Remember that as his Proposer, you are expected to propose the toast to the Initiate at the Festive Board. You can download a sample speech from the internet which you can use as your template if you are unsure how to go about it.

Response to the Toast to the Initiate:

You must give the Candidate as much help and time as you can to prepare for his response to your toast. The shorter his response, the better received it is likely to be by the Brethren, but there are certain things it ought to contain, you can download a sample template from the internet which you can use if you are unsure how to advise the Candidate.

Money:

Make certain that he knows exactly how much money he must part with on the night for his Initiation fees and Annual Membership fees. He will also need cash to pay for table wine, drinks, and the raffle. This first meal may be paid for by the Lodge or his proposer, but he will usually buy his own wine, so you need to advise him how to go about ordering the wine and getting it to his table place before he parades in with the Worshipful Master.

Regalia:

The Lodge will usually lend him an Entered Apprentice apron, and later a Fellow Craft's. When it is time for his Third Degree he will need to purchase, in advance, a Master Mason's apron and some white gloves (if he is only allowed to wear gloves on becoming a Master Mason, otherwise he will need to have bought them for his Initiation). Often, the Proposer will purchase these items for his Candidate, but that is up to him.

Progression Planning and Satisfaction Survey

Progression Planning not only assists the Lodge by helping to plan logically the officers for the future, it also has a benefit for the individual member in that aspirations, or not, be recorded and developed.

Planning for the Future

To help with planning for the future of the Lodge we would be grateful if you would answer a few questions regarding your personal situation in the lodge. This is to help the Worshipful Master, Lodge Committee and Director of Ceremonies with future planning and organization, and *does not commit you or them in any way whatsoever*.

Name	Present Role <i>(if any)</i>					
<i>Please indicate by ticking the appropriate column if you would like to undertake any of the offices below</i>						
Offices & Workings	Now	In the Future	Never	"Stand In"	Don't Know	Interested
<i>Steward</i>						
<i>Senior Steward</i>						
<i>Inner Guard</i>						
<i>Junior Deacon</i>						
<i>Senior Deacon</i>						
<i>Junior Warden</i>						
<i>Senior Warden</i>						
<i>Worshipful Master</i>						
<i>Tyler</i>						
<i>Secretary</i>						
<i>Treasurer</i>						
<i>Chaplin</i>						
<i>Almoner</i>						
<i>Charity Steward</i>						
<i>Director of Ceremonies</i>						
<i>Asst. D. of Ceremonies</i>						
<i>Organist (Playing)</i>						
<i>Organist (Computer)</i>						
<i>Lodge Mentor</i>						
<i>Mentor</i>						
<i>Royal Arch Liaison</i>						
<i>Would you be Interested in delivering the following?</i>						
<i>1st Degree Working Tools</i>						
<i>2nd Degree Working Tools</i>						
<i>3rd Degree Working Tools</i>						
<i>Charge after Initiation</i>						
<i>2nd Degree Tracing Board</i>						
<i>Traditional History</i>						
<i>Address to the Master</i>						
<i>Address to the Wardens</i>						
<i>Address to the Brethren</i>						
<i>Any Further Comments</i>						

Satisfaction Survey

We would be interested in your views of the Lodge. If you wish, this page can be returned separately and anonymously. If you do not wish to answer any particular question, please just ignore it.

Type of Membership	Full	Country	Honorary	
Your age Range	< 49	50 - 60	61 - 70	71 >
Are you a	Master Mason		Past Master	

How many meetings do you general attend each season?	All	4 to 6	1 to 3	Rarely attend
---	------------	---------------	---------------	----------------------

**On a scale of 1-4 (1= Poor / 4 = Good),
please rate the lodge for the following categories**

	1	2	3	4
Lodge of Instruction				
Friendliness				
Cost of Membership				
Progressiveness				
Success				
Happiness				
Enjoyment				
Value for Money				
Effectiveness				
Time of meetings				
Standard of Festive Board				
Communication				
How welcomig				
Standard of Ritual				
Personal Involvement				
Social Activities				
Openness				
Democracy				

Please state what you feel is the BEST thing about the lodge

Please indicate one thing you would wish to CHANGE about the Lodge if you could

Individual Mentoring Record Sheet

This documentation is from the Grand Lodge Website and should be adapted and used, or not for each individual as necessary.

Lodge			
Candidate		Initiation	
Proposer		Passing	
Secunder		Raising	
Mentor		Worshipful Master	

The following is a list of topics / activities the Mentor may wish to discuss with Mentee. It is not a prescriptive list and should be adapted and added to as needed.

Topic / Activity	Comments eg. Date discussed & action needed
-------------------------	--

Entered Apprentice	
Apron	
Tools	
Lodge Layout	
Lodge Officers	
Lodge History	
Visiting	
Charities	
Festive Board	
Book of Constitutions (Rules & Regs)	
Progression Questions	

Fellowcraft	
Apron	
Tools	
Lodge Layout	
Progression Questions	
Grand & Provincial Officers	

Introducing the Candidate to his Personal Mentor

It has been suggested by the Grand Lodge Mentoring Group that at the end of the Ceremony of Initiation i.e. after the Charge, the Initiate should be formally Introduced to his Personal Mentor In open lodge.

Having asked the chosen Mentor to join the Initiate at the Pedestal, the Worshipful Master should then make the introduction as follows:

“Brother that concludes the ceremony of your initiation into Freemasonry. As was explained in the ceremony, you are now encouraged to make a daily advancement In Masonic knowledge. To help you do this we have asked W.Bro. (or Bro.) to act as your guide and Mentor.

He will explain to you, and help you to understand, the ceremony you have just undertaken, as well as the ceremonies to follow. He will answer any questions you may have, and will explain the history of Freemasonry, our Traditions and, of course, our Charitable aims. He will also personally introduce you to each of the members of the Lodge.

So may I now be the first to welcome you to the worldwide fraternity of Freemasons In general. and into this, the Lodge No in particular”.

Assuming the Mentor holds no other office, both he and the Initiate should then be seated together in the north-east part of the Lodge. If this is not possible, another Brother should be assigned to guide the Initiate through the remainder of the meeting.

(NOTE: 2 Seats need to be reserved next to the Senior Deacon).

Lodge Mentors Report to Open Lodge

Items that can be considered for inclusion:

- Name of the mentors for the various brethren.
- Progress of new brethren in the lodge
- Developments in mentoring in the Lodge and Province
- Ideas to be implemented/introduced
- Candidate/New Brother accompanied when out of the lodge
- Report on what done
- Reasons for absence of brethren from lodge meetings, those not covered by the Almoner
- Progression Planning
- Seminars, eg Master’s Chair
- Visits to other lodges for “new” members
- Once a year, publish the state-of-the-lodge statistics as obtained from the Lodge Mentor Records spreadsheet
- See Support Documentation on the Mentoring Section of the Membership page on the Provincial website.

Leadership in Freemasonry

LEADERSHIP: "The ability to motivate a group of people towards achieving a common goal".

One of the questions most often asked by those about to take the chair of their Lodge for the first time is "how can I acquire the leadership skills I need to do the job well?"

It is a fact that on achieving the Mastership of your Lodge you will, for the next 12 months, become the person to whom your Brethren will look for leadership and direction. In order to fulfil their expectations, you need to have a clear vision of what you want to achieve and the courage of your convictions to deal with difficulties should they arise.

Your team of officers is looking for someone they can trust and follow with confidence. Your members want someone who can provide guidance to his fellow Masons and who will act as a responsible steward of the standards and traditions of the Lodge.

The good news is that you don't need to be tall, well spoken, good looking or even clever to be an effective leader. There is no "special something" that leaders possess. What they do have is integrity, honesty, humility, focus and consistency.

Being an effective leader is not the same as being 'The Boss'. You need to foster a collaborative culture in which each member your team can flourish and develop to his fullest potential. Although you are the figurehead of the Lodge you cannot succeed without the unswerving support of your team of officers and the goodwill of your members.

Steps to effective Leadership

- Develop self-awareness. Assess your own strengths, weaknesses, values, motivations, passions, and your own leadership style. Priorities what is important to you.
- Develop self-management skills. Stop and reflect on how you view things. Consider your own sense of integrity, initiative, adaptability, self-discipline and resilience.
- Build relationships, both your own and those between Lodge members. Be empathetic, inclusive, impartial, and fair. All successful relationships are based on integrity and trust.
- Develop your communication skills. Learn how to listen effectively. You have 2 ears and one mouth, use them in that proportion!
- Develop your team. Your role is one of facilitator. Create an environment which encourages collaboration and compromise but which empowers and encourages each Individual to contribute to his fullest potential.
- Be the best you can. Fulfil your duties to the best of your ability. Be an effective and assiduous ambassador for your Lodge.
- Finally, remember: leaders are not made; leaders are not born. Leadership is a choice, a belief in, and a commitment to, the tenets and principles which you hold dear. Stay true to everything that is noble and good within you and you will not go far wrong.

Top 10 Tips for Stress Free Ritual

How often have you sat in a Lodge, marvelling at a piece of almost word perfect ritual and thought to yourself "How does he do that?" For most of us learning our ceremonies can seem like very hard work indeed. Well, now you can make life much easier for yourself by following these 10 simple tips to aid successful learning.

One step at a time

Very few people are able to learn a whole ceremony at one go. Far better to break it down into small bite-sized chunks, each of which can be learned in a short period, Once each part has been mastered it only remains to recall the order in which they come. Remember the old adage: "...by the Inch it's a cinch, by the yard it's hard!"

Little and Often

Flogging away, for hours on end, once a month will be less effective (and a lot harder!) than 5 or 10 minutes spent each day working on small segments of the ritual. Our forebears' admonition to make "...a daily advance in Masonic knowledge" was sage advice hundreds of years ago. It still holds good today!

Pacing yourself

If you are going to successfully learn the ritual, it has to fit into your everyday life. Making a regular appointment with yourself is one way of ensuring that progress is continuous. The amount of time you devote to it will depend on work, family or other commitments. Go at a speed that suits you and do not be pressurised into running before you can walk. If you need to, you can always spread the work you do as Worshipful Master over 2 years.

Have a clearly defined goal

Setting yourself a goal such as "I want to be able to do the First Degree by this time next year" gives you something tangible to go for. Make sure your goal is achievable and do not be afraid to review it if your personal circumstances change. Discuss your goal with your Personal Mentor and together plan how you are going to achieve it.

What type of memory do you have?

Recognizing the type of memory, you have will help you to develop the learning regime that suits you best. If you have a "photographic" memory that can recall visual images better than other types of information, then a flowchart is a good way of remembering the order of the various parts of the ceremony. If on the other hand you have an "aural" memory which can recall sounds and rhythms best, then recording the part you are trying to learn and listening to it may be better.

Using Mnemonics

Many sections of the ritual take the form of lists which can be very difficult to remember in the correct order. Overcome this by developing your own easy-to-recall mnemonics. For example..... "duly Constituted, regularly Assembled and properly Dedicated" can easily be got right by using the mnemonicCAD.

Use your Mentor

If a Personal Mentor has not already been appointed for you, seek out your own. Look for someone who is experienced, knowledgeable. and a good listener. Tell him what you hope to achieve and ask him to support you. Having someone else committed to achieving your goals is invaluable and will help you stay motivated.

Brain Training

Think of your mind as a muscle that needs regular exercise to keep it in good shape. The more you practice, the easier it becomes. Very few people are naturally gifted with an exceptional memory. For the majority, success comes from hard work and dedication.

Have fun!

Remember that Freemasonry should be fun. If you are not enjoying your Masonic experience then something is wrong. Talk to your Personal Mentor and explain the difficulties you are encountering. Look again at the goals you have set, and the means by which you are setting about achieving them.

Practice makes Perfect

Your Lodge of Instruction is the perfect place to practise performing the ritual in real time. It is all very well being word perfect on your own in the car, but coping with nerves, and working as part of a team pose quite different problems. Do not be shy about having a go, and never worry about making a mistake.

Perfect ritual is something that very few people achieve, and then often only after years of hard work and rigorous training. Until you reach that point, just ensure that your work is the best you can make it.

Prepared and revised by Graham Watkins - April 2018