



PROVINCE OF EAST KENT

Support and Development Group

Qualifying an unknown Applicant.

One of the results of our greater openness is that more and more Lodges are being approached by members of the public who have no Masonic connections. Here in East Kent, our Website, our improved Public Relations, and our presence at the Kent County Show are all generating a small but growing number of enquiries from members of the Public regarding possible membership.

The Provincial Office will normally have a record of the initial contact with some brief details about the enquirer, but once the enquiry has been referred to a Lodge, **how should they proceed to ensure a successful outcome both for the Enquirer and for Freemasonry?**

A telephone interview is a good way of forming an initial impression of the enquirer. It provides an opportunity to establish whether the wish to become a Freemason is genuine and has been thought through. Someone who was “just passing” is unlikely to have given any thought as to why he wishes to join our order, he is even less likely to have discussed it with his family. However keep an open mind and remember “every journey starts with a single step”.

The interviewer should prepare a list of “open” questions (How? Why? When? Who? Where?) designed to encourage feedback, explore opinions, and establish the extent to which the enquirer understands what Freemasonry is. The sole purpose of this conversation is to establish whether a face to face interview is appropriate so too much detail at this stage is unnecessary. As a minimum, the following points need to be established....

- **That the enquirer professes belief in a Supreme Being.**
- **That his motives for wanting to become a Freemason are acceptable.**
- **That his membership will not cause either Financial or Domestic difficulties.**
- **That he has the support of his wife / partner / family in seeking membership.**

If the initial impression is favourable then the next recommended step is for two experienced brethren to meet the enquirer in his home to discuss his possible membership in greater detail and to check the responses obtained during the telephone interview. A frivolous enquirer will often balk at this, but a genuine applicant will have no problems with it.

It is very important that the enquirer’s wife or partner is involved in these discussions, and that any fears or concerns she may have are dealt with at this stage. Some Lodges send along not two Freemasons, but a Freemason with his wife so that the lady concerned can seek reassurance from another woman with direct experience of the Craft.

At this second interview, as well as checking the points listed above, the interviewer needs to confirm the following.....

- **That both the potential candidate and his partner understand the time commitments that Freemasonry involves.**
- **That they have a clear and full understanding of the financial obligations which membership incurs.**
- **That they will support the Lodge's Charitable aims.**
- **That they are aware of, and will support the Lodge's social activities.**

The Interviewer(s) need to listen actively to the answers they are given, and to give their hosts the opportunity to talk.

They also need to understand that **part of their role is to represent Freemasonry**. You never get a second chance to make a good first impression, so it is important to prepare properly and to have ready answers to such questions as "Why do you wear aprons?", "What's all this about rolling up your trousers?" or "Why do you exclude women?"

Questions should be answered honestly and openly. Remember there is very little about Freemasonry that cannot be discussed.

If the outcome of this interview is satisfactory, then a good next step is to invite the enquirer and his wife to come along to a Lodge social function or White Table evening. It gives them the opportunity to experience Masonic culture at first hand, and allows Lodge members to confirm initial impressions. However as they will probably not know anyone, a brother should be delegated to act as host, make introductions and generally ensure that they are made to feel welcome.

Assuming that all parties are still in agreement then it is at this stage that a formal interview with the Lodge's reference committee should be arranged.

This somewhat protracted process should not be rushed through just to fill a gap in the Lodge's programme of work. A candidate who joins for the right reasons is going to find fulfilment. A candidate who seeks opportunities for personal development will derive satisfaction from his membership. A candidate who understands Freemasonry will find room for it in his life and, with the full and active support of his partner, will be able to enjoy his membership to the full.

If all these criteria are fulfilled then hopefully he will go on to enjoy a long and happy Masonic experience with "**satisfaction to himself and advantage to his Lodge**".