

GRESHAM'S SCHOOL, OGs, and the OG MASONIC LODGE

Shared values and aspirations

What is Freemasonry?

Freemasonry, one of the world's oldest fraternities, takes its roots from the craft guilds of the middle ages, whose members, like today's freemasons, enjoyed guidance, encouragement and support from their more senior fellows. The essence of freemasonry is to teach its members good citizenship, humility and self-knowledge. Practising these values leads a freemason to become a more useful and respected member of society.

The Old Greshamian Lodge was founded in 1939, to enable OGs and their guests to convene quarterly, and to be reminded of the timelessness of these masonic values, which we acknowledge through the ritual of our meeting ceremonies. Afterwards, we enjoy each other's company at relaxed and sociable dinners. Generations of old boys, both in Norfolk and throughout the world, thus sustain their personal friendships, and a continuing interest in the well-being of the school. From its foundation, this momentum has been maintained with a steady influx of OGs and masters joining our Lodge.

Three principles of freemasonry

Characterising the moral code of freemasonry are three cardinal principles: brotherly love, relief and truth.

Brotherly love means that a freemason shows tolerance and respect for the opinions of others, and behaves with kindness and understanding to his fellows.

Relief implies that freemasons are taught to practice charity, and to care not only for themselves and their immediate family, but also, within their individual means, for the community as a whole.

Truth is our quest for awareness and enlightenment. Self-recognition of personal strengths and weaknesses encourages behavioural patterns that maintain a freemason's self-respect and reputation within his community.

Adoption and development of these ethics of freemasonry is character-forming.

Masonic understanding and faith

Think how little those medieval guildsmen knew about things that today we take for granted. Even today, we understand only the tiniest proportion of all that there is to know about our universe. It follows that we can rule out nothing. The very recent exciting exploits at the Large Hadron Collider in Geneva show how much more remains unknown beyond our limited comprehension. This triggers our sense of humility about our relative insignificance in the overall panoply of the universe.

Freemasons are therefore expected to acknowledge belief in some kind of supreme being, and this defines the limit of religious commitment within the brotherhood. Freemasonry avoids arbitrating between different faiths, requiring only a belief that the evolution of our universe, with all that it contains, is unlikely to have been a totally random event. Its complexity and subtlety are much more likely to be due to some guiding hand, however unrecognisable this may be to us on our planet, Earth. The way each of us interprets this philosophical point has to be entirely individual. Religion is one way, but certainly not the only way, of coming to terms with this masonic proposition. To avoid the scope for dispute on beliefs we each form individually, our Lodge practice rules out any discussion on religion – and also on politics.

Masonic ceremony

Masonic values and principles may seem rather old-fashioned, but the need for them in today's world has actually never been stronger. How have they been preserved and maintained from one generation of freemasons to the next? They are passed on at our meetings by means of a series of ritual dramas, which are loosely associated with the building of the temple in Jerusalem, in the reign of King Solomon. These masonic texts are beautifully written, and their assimilation reveals their relevance to life today. In a similar fashion to many Greek, Roman and even Shakespearean dramas, our ceremonies contain many messages that bear upon relationships within our society, which in turn serve as a guide to our own attitudes and behaviour.

Masonry and Gresham's School

What has all this to do with us as OGs, and our education at Gresham's School?

Gresham's is a liberal and progressive school, and has been blessed with many enlightened head and assistant masters, who have passed on to their pupils many of the very same personal development values that we as citizens, and especially we as freemasons, seek to embrace. The similarity between the school's ethos, and our masonic pursuit of brotherly love, relief and truth is actually remarkably close. Our Lodge preserves a golden thread to encourage strong kinship amongst OGs, and goodwill towards the school.

Does this interest you?

Young men leaving Gresham's who would like to know more about freemasonry in general, and the activities of the Old Greshamian Lodge in particular, are encouraged to contact the Secretary, whose contact details can be found on the OG Lodge page, which is accessed, via the Clubs and Societies Link, from the main OG Club website.

David Barker (c & W 1952-59)

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