

Should my Lodge have a Website?

Banks have them, stores have them, television channels have them and the British Monarchy has one. Small organisations have them, actors have them and some ordinary people have a personal one.

What am I talking about? Websites!

Should my lodge have one? Freemasonry is a traditional organisation with its origins in the mists of time and it is important that our traditions remain in place. This does not mean that we cannot address modern technology.

Many lodges word-process their minutes and they send out summonses as email attachments. The Provincial Office is able to contact over 90% of Durham lodges by email. Both examples of modern technology in action!

So, asking the question again, should my lodge have a website? If the answer is "Yes" perhaps the following may help you with your project.

Starting Out:

A good starting point is to have a look at other websites for ideas. A search on the internet will bring in many results including Durham lodges that have already put a site together.

Start your planning on paper and work out what you would like on each page. The following pages are in no particular order though obviously the home page is always first.

Home Page:

Should contain lodge name, number, venue and starting time. Differentiate between regular meetings and your Installation meeting if they have different starting times. Try to include a good copy of your lodge badge. Don't have too many pictures as the page may take too long to load. Some surfers are impatient!

History page:

Try to find something a bit different which will bring in surfers. Have a long list of metatags (key words) relating to your lodge and your town/city. Perhaps you can put together a good article about the formation of your lodge or the Masons who founded it? Is there something special about your lodge badge? Is your lodge named after a famous person?

An Officers Page:

An optional page. Some lodges have them others avoid them. They always look better if all your officers are mentioned and nobody opts out. If you have a lot of gaps – scrap it. It is worthwhile asking your Past-Masters to sign up their permission. If they are deceased you don't need their permission – not that they are able to give it!

News Page:

Again a good idea if lodge members are happy to have their names and/or photographs on it otherwise words such as "the lodge held a **** event and twenty members attended", etc. If you are stuck for news have a look at the items on the Provincial website news page.

You might want to put a lodge programme of forthcoming meetings, but it is important that past meeting details are removed as new ones are added.

Recruitment Page:

I know it can be a touchy subject with some members, but a number Durham lodges have had great success with “internet candidates”. If lodges are cautious in dealing with these applications these candidates can turn out to be as good as members recruited by the traditional methods.

General:

Start with small beginnings and you'll be amazed how your website will grow. Technical advice is available from the Provincial IT group and basic “starter” templates are also available.

Keep you website updated and remove out of date parts of it.

Make sure your site represents Freemasonry in the best possible way. We have a good time, our Provincial Grand Master wants us to enjoy our Freemasonry and we enjoy a meal and a drink after our ceremonies, **but** don't make it look as if we are an eating or worse still a drinking club!

Don't have any advertising on your site or it will not be approved by the Province or United Grand Lodge. It is acceptable to advertise your Masonic building for non-Masonic use. You must not have sponsors or general advertisements on your domain – please avoid them.

Approval:

Your website must be approved by the Province. When your site is completed (though in reality it never is complete) please let me know, send me a link to it and I'll complete the United Grand Lodge of England approval process on your behalf. I will check your site for grammatical and spelling errors – please don't be offended as mistakes are easily made and a fresh eye looking over your work usually spots them.

If I can make any improvement suggestions you might want to act on them and when we are both happy I'll sent your site off for approval to Grand Lodge. Usually Province of Durham approval is accepted and formal approval is given by UGLE in days or a couple of weeks. United Grand Lodge will then send me a charter mark which I will pass on to you.

You have the option to host your own site or have it as part of the Provincial site.

If you have any lodge members who are not happy about their lodge having a website point out the advantages. Sadly some Masons would prefer to sit back and hope that their lodge will survive as it did in the past.

Returning to where I started, we may be a long established organisation with traditional ceremonies and customs, but we also need to move into the twenty-first century. The Province of Durham has a website why not our lodges too?

Bernard Hope
Secretary – Province of Durham IT Group

Lodge Website Enquiries, Website Content Help, Technical Advice and United Grand Lodge of England Approval

Email: pwwp@durhamfreemasons.org