

Day One

As a prospective Entered Apprentice coming to that initial interview, even though the mood in the room is relaxed, there is a degree of nervous apprehension as to what will be asked and how your answers will be interpreted. Whilst not a foregone conclusion, the outcome is successful and we wonder what all the worry was about!

There is a degree of responsibility on the prospective EA to get more involved in their own initiation: buying the regulation dark suit & gloves, making sure their invited guests get/respond to their invitations, and make sure the after-initiation speech includes thanks to the right people and by order of their masonic ranks.

Arriving for the first time in my soon-to-become regular attire, everyone tries to help you relax with light-hearted banter, but seeing those you'd last seen at your interview, then others from the lodge, and your invited guests, you know it's something special. Being led upstairs to the lodge room, on this occasion it was two of us to be initiated at the same time, it had been explained how this would work, and how help may be given during the ceremony.

Outside the lodge room, it suddenly becomes more formal when everyone puts on their full regalia; as a prospective EA, we are given a plain apron, shown how it should be worn, then led into the lodge room. My invited guests, one local and three others from Essex, wore their regalia with pride and gave me the slightest of nods, a knowing smile, before business commenced. Whilst I had seen the room before on an open informal night, seeing it now with all the brethren in "business" attire added an air of anticipation.

The lodge is opened by the Worshipful Master in the First Degree, pre-initiation business is conducted, before the new soon-to-be Entered Apprentices are led outside to the anti-room where they are "prepared" by the Tyler: the pre-initiation preparation will seem bizarre to the uninitiated but, as I am learning already, each has a meaning within the timeline of freemasonry. Being led back into the lodge room, and blindfolded, losing sensory perception is a strange feeling as you try to visualise what's occurring but, with a guiding arm of the Junior Deacon, you settle and allow yourself to be guided through the process.

As we later find out, there are multiple stages of the initiation process: Admitting the Candidate, Prayer, Perambulation, Obligation, Entrustment, and Working Tools. All seemed quite quirky at the time and we'll all have our own memories of our respective initiations but, for me, aside from coming out of it all successfully, I do recall an incident with a candle.

My initiation was temporarily put on hold at around 80% done as, being a dual initiation, my colleague had to go through all of this separately. Being first in, I was led outside the lodge room and allowed to return to my pre-initiation attire. Watching my colleague go through the same aspects of ritual up to that point where I had stopped, I smile. We now both participate in the Charge After Initiation stage before, in processional order, we leave the lodge room as Entered Apprentices.

It's a strange feeling as we leave the lodge room, almost a deflated feeling, as we realise that we've gone through something special, but it leaves a lot of unanswered questions as to what

we've just gone through. We know they'll be answered in time but, if you're like me, you'll want those answers now so you can rationalise what's occurred.

Patience is a virtue, so they say.

Bro Stuart McDonald

Grants Lodge 8825