



**Internet Lodge 9659**  
**United Grand Lodge of England**  
**Province of East Lancashire**  
<http://internet.lodge.org.uk>

**Short Papers Competition 2007**

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**Paper 09/2007**

**Title**  
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**The Lodge Banner**  
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In military history, banners were used as a rallying point in battle, but nowadays they display the heraldic arms of someone important, or symbolise the principles of fellowship of an organisation – not just Freemasonry, but Trade Unions and Orangemen for example.

These emblems of heraldry express an honest pride in past achievements, act as inspiration to the present generation and give promise of a hopeful outlook for the future. Their value is not in what they are, but in what they represent.

There are several ways in which a banner can be used. It can be carried at the head of a procession, either on foot, or on horseback, followed by members of the organisation, or it can be displayed in a fixed spot serving as a rallying point for the members to congregate. In either case, the members identify themselves with it and with the principles and ideals of which the banner is a symbol.

Our Book of Constitutions doesn't provide for the use of banners in masonic lodges. However, they are used in Grand Lodge and many Provincial Grand Lodges. In the opening ceremony of a Grand Lodge meeting, the Pro Grand Master asks, "What is your duty?" and the Grand Pursuivant sometimes nervously replies:

"To give a due report of all approaching brethren and to see that they are properly clothed and ranged under their respective banners".

In reality, brethren no longer range under anything now, and the banners are often in the form of a conventional flag and are carried in the ceremonial processions by the Standard Bearers. The Arms shown on the Grand Lodge banner are a combination of the coats of arms of the Premier Grand Lodge and those of the Grand Lodge of the Antients. The former, founded in 1717 adopted the arms of the 3 castles, a chevron and compasses, and the latter adopted the Arms showing the man, the lion, the ox and the eagle. These also feature on the 4 banners behind the Principals' chairs in Royal Arch, and the significance of this must surely lie in the fact that the Antients were keen protagonists of Royal Arch and considered it as the 4<sup>th</sup> degree. But what purpose does a banner really serve in a lodge? It should have a special meaning for every member, so that when someone is boring you to death like I am, you can look at it and there is depicted a spiritual enlightenment of our order.

In the early years of Grand Lodge, banners featured prominently in outdoor processions such as church services or stone laying ceremonies and reported on in local newspapers. Nowadays, they rarely leave the Temples in which they are displayed and are now seldom used for their original purpose, i.e. 'showing the flag' to the outside world.

So a lodge banner has enormous symbolic significance and next time you look at it in lodge, I hope it fills you with pride, inspiration and hope for the future.

*Short papers are intended to be read aloud in lodge meetings as a form of Masonic Education.  
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