

Annual Trip to Spinoza Lodge N0:50 Ostende Belgium May 2022

Friday 6th May 2022

On the 6th May 2022, 19 intrepid Freemasons, (6 of whom were making this trip for the first time), from the Province of East Kent, set off to re-connect with the Brethren of the Spinoza Lodge No:50, of the Regular Grand Lodge of Belgium, on their 6th annual visit for their Installation meeting. The trip had obviously been missed in 2021 due to the lockdown, but all of us were excited to be going once again.

A smooth start had been planned, but as always there were some minor hiccups along the way, one of the cars having to make quite a large diversion to avoid early morning traffic congestion in Canterbury, but the 19, in 4 cars all met up outside the Dover Masonic Hall, one car being 20 minutes late. Unfortunately this car had a further hiccup.

As the cars were being loaded, one of the members discovered he had left his suit at home, making frantic telephone calls, he arranged for his wife to drive from Broadstairs to the Eurotunnel terminal, although this necessitated a small delay at Folkestone, all cars managed to get to the terminal and departure gates on time, one car deciding on check in, to travel on a train 10 minutes early. Tour fines were immediately issued, but we'll come back to that later.

All drivers had been briefed to make their way to Adinkerke, where we would all meet up, which duly happened, some could do their shopping, whilst others partook of some lunch and a small imbibement. An excellent lunch, shopping completed, we made our way from Adinkerke to Ostend where we booked in to our home for the next two evenings, around 4:00pm.



Saturday 7th May 2022

After a good night's sleep and a hearty breakfast, the morning was free to explore Ostende, but at 12:00 we all began to meet in the Lobby for our taxi's to go to Gistel and the Hotel Tenputte, where the Spinoza Lodge Installation was to be held. A large room on the ground floor of the hotel is permanently set up as the Temple for Spinoza, but as we had plenty of time prior to the meeting, a local hostelry about two minutes' walk away provided light refreshments and a spot of lunch.

It was at this point that we met up with some other Freemasons who were also going to be attending the meeting who had travelled from Germany, lots of conversations were had and new friendships were made, even giving rise to perhaps arranging another trip to their Lodge in Germany, we will see how that progresses.

Arriving in good time to prepare for the meeting, it was great to meet up with old friends, some of whom we had not seen in almost two years but, who still gave us that warm welcome back that we had all missed, the bonds of the fraternity still as strong as it always is. Forming up to be escorted in to the Lodge, we made our way to our seats to take part in and observe a full Installation of the new Worshipful Master of the Spinoza Lodge, W.Bro Didier Verschure. A ceremony that was conducted in the Flemish language, but one which we could all understand through the symbolism and ritual, everything happening in the same way as the UK.



After the meeting, we moved on to the Festive board, a superb meal was served, speeches given from Freemasons from Belgium, England, France Germany and Holland, a truly international meeting, presentations were made from W.Bro Peter Guise of a certificate of Fellowship and Friendship to the newly installed Master, and a presentation of a Septem Lodge Past Masters Jewel was also made, not to be worn in Lodge but afterwards at the Festive Board, to signify something special between the two Lodges, to be presented by the Newly Installed Master to the Immediate Past Master each year as a new tradition as had been done with the presentation of a Spinoza Jewel to the Master of the Septem Lodge for passing on to his successor as had been done in previous years.



During the Festive Board, a surprise for W.Bro Colin North, as most of the Province is aware, he had given himself a challenge of riding a Lawnmower from Lands’ End to John ‘O Groats to set a new Guinness book of World Record, to raise much needed funds for the Motor Neurone Disease, Kenward Trust and 2025 Festival for the MCF Charities. The members of the Spinoza Lodge presented him with £400 as a donation for his attempt, visibly emotional Colin thanked the members of the Spinoza Lodge and gave a brief talk as to why he had chosen the three charities he was supporting, this was received well and a suitable ovation was given.

At the end of the evening, all brethren retired and did some socialising with each other, names and addresses were exchanged new friendships were forged and a promise to meet again in the not too distant future. Celebrations did not quite end there though, at the, request of his wife to be, during the socialising W.Bro John Newman changed from his Masonic dress for a Pink Tutu and Wedding Veil with some additional makeup applied by the Septem Master Elect, Bro Alex Coppin, to celebrate his upcoming wedding in July by completing the evening as his ‘Stag Party’



Sunday 8th May 2022



After a day and night of enjoyment and fun, the party rose reasonably early and ate another hearty breakfast before checking out of the hotel and making our way back to Adinkerke for final shopping but most importantly, the trip ‘fines’ meeting. Our Fines Master was W.Bro John Newman and he had been keeping notes, every member of the party received fines of some sort or another, it was hilarious but all taken in good part and each fine was collected. It has always been traditional that the tour fines were put in to our Ruling Masters Charity for his year, unselfishly, W.Bro Peter Guise gave up this tradition and was happy for the fines money to be given to W.Bro Colin North and his epic Mower ride, so a further £300 and €250 was donated to his Charities, around £900 for the weekend, in total being donated.

Some went on to Cite Europe for a nice lunch while some decided to try to get an earlier train from Calais as the weekend came to a close.

Our Provincial Grand Master has always echoed the Rulers of our great Fraternity, Freemasonry should be fun, well this was a fun filled weekend, our Masonic Decorum taken seriously, whilst having fun and our socialising being an excellent way of making and keeping new friends, we will always remember this trip and all of the new brothers we have met.

On a final note, I personally would like to thank our Active Officers who helped to make this such a special trip, W.Bro Mark, W.Bro David, W.Bro Colin, our TV Star, Bro Paul Bohill, his friend from Hull Bro Andy Ward, our special guests W.Bro Gerry and W.Bro Arthur, all the members of the Septem Lodge, especially our two newer members, Bro Mariusz and Bro Ian, thank you to all, for giving me so few headaches, for your co-operation in getting all the documents completed and for making it so very easy to organise a fantastic weekend which I have been able to enjoy, even with the odd hiccup, and Gerry, if you make the trip next year, you will never have to wear a light blue tour jacket again. Thank you all for being my brothers.

