

The Combe Martin Branch of the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes

The local branch of the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes (R.A.O.B.)—commonly known as "The Buffs"—was once an active and vital fixture of community life in Combe Martin, North Devon. Often referred to colloquially or locally as the "Grand Order," it was part of a major British fraternal and charitable organisation founded in London during 1822.



History and Combe Martin Activity

Evidence preserved in the [Combe Martin Museum](#) and parish records shows that one or more Buffalo Lodges (i.e. Bratton Lodge 8766) operated in the village throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. During their most active periods, the Combe Martin 'Buffs' reportedly held their meetings and social gatherings at the [Combe Martin Village Hall](#) on High Street.

Boards, regalia, members' names, and the history of the Combe Martin R.A.O.B. can be viewed at [Combe Martin Museum](#) on Cross Street, near the Seaside quarter. In addition, there is an extant R.A.O.B. Hall at Ilfracombe on the High Street.

Like many chapters across the UK, the Combe Martin lodges combined light-hearted fellowship with strict charitable fundraising. Following a nationwide trend, local membership experienced a sharp decline in the twentieth century, and the Combe Martin branches eventually became defunct. However, their legacy lives on through surviving certificates, ceremonial regalia, and historic artifacts found across the parish.

What is the Order of the Buffaloes?

The R.A.O.B. originally started as a working-class social club for theatre tech crews, artists, and comedians at London's Harp Tavern. Though it adopted a lodge structure, formal titles, and elaborate regalia that resembled Freemasonry, it has always been an entirely separate and independent organisation.

- **The Name:** The grand and theatrical titles were chosen with a dose of 19th-century irony. "Antediluvian" jokingly implies the group existed "before the Great Flood," while "Royal" was adopted after members were historically misheard pronouncing their allegiance as the "Loyal Order".
- **The Motto:** The order guides itself by the Latin motto *Nemo Mortalium Omnibus Horis Sapiens*—"No Man Is At All Times Wise"—and the maxims of Justice, Truth, and Philanthropy.
- **Rules & Focus:** To ensure harmony among its members, all discussions regarding politics and religion are strictly forbidden during lodge meetings.
- The wider [Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes](#) continues to operate today across the UK and internationally, maintaining its centuries-old commitment to supporting local communities and national charities.

While individual branches operated under specific lodge numbers and names (and reported regionally up to provincial bodies like the Devonshire or North Devon jurisdictions), the overarching movement itself is officially the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes, though various grand administrative bodies govern it nationally). Visitors can view Combe Martin R.A.O.B. history at the [Combe Martin Museum and Information Point](#).

Combe
Martin
Museum



Sources

<https://www.raobgle.org.uk/>

<https://www.combemartinvillage.co.uk/community/combe-martin-buffaloes>

<https://www.rmg.co.uk/collections/objects/rmgc-object-40228>