

MASONIC ETIQUETTE AND SCOTTISH USAGE

Grand Lodge of Scotland Year Book 2011

In the 1966 Year Book an article entitled *Masonic Etiquette and Scottish Usage*, by Brother George Draffen, was published. Many Brethren have asked for a copy of this article and it is hereunder reproduced, with some minor amendments. Brother Draffen's words of wisdom have stood the test of time as the import and accuracy of his observations on proper Scottish Masonic Etiquette are as fitting and correct today as they were forty-five years ago.

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The word etiquette has been defined as the "established rule of procedure and ceremony in a court or in any official or other body". Perhaps for Masonic purposes it can be defined as "that set of conventions, rules, customs and traditions by which Masons are expected to govern themselves, when engaged in the rites and ceremonies of the Craft". Etymologically the word 'etiquette' means 'a la carte', that is 'according to the card'. It harks back to France when it was the custom to give each guest at court or formal reception, a card bearing his name, rank and precedence. While this suggestion of a more or less arbitrary convention and formal ceremoniousness continues, even in our own use of the word, etiquette is by no means wholly a matter of formality. It is born out of the necessity of social contacts and has its roots in social realities.

Every society or group of human beings has its own code of etiquette. There is etiquette of the streets as well as of the home. There is etiquette of the Courts of Law, of clubs, of theatres, indeed of all manner of social and formal gatherings. In every form and degree of human intercourse there is this tacit reference to a code of manners without which human conduct would become unbearable. In having its own code of manners, its etiquette, Freemasonry is but following the example of other social groups.

DECORUM

By etiquette Freemasons acknowledge and express their respect for the Craft. It makes pleasant their contacts with their fellows, smoothes the path of duty, establishes an equality of treatment for all Brethren, protects the good name of the Craft and greatly assists in establishing that harmony and unity which should exist between all Freemasons. When Masons act as a unit, as in a Lodge meeting, or at a Regular Communication of Grand Lodge or Provincial Grand Lodge, etiquette takes the form of proper decorum. That means that all present act in a manner appropriate to the occasion. Loud talk, restless moving about, coughing, laughter and private conversations during ceremonial work, giving no attention to the work in hand - no Brother need consult a book on etiquette to discover that such behaviour is unseemly and irreverent

It disturbs the harmony of the Lodge, and it is such an atmosphere that hard feelings, not to mention the more serious menace of schism and feud, are most likely to take root

It is not too much to say that the Master of a Lodge who permits such things is unwise, and not as faithful as he should be in discharging the duties of his office.

At the beginning of things, before Grand Lodges were in existence, Freemasons discovered the necessity of decorum. Among the Old Charges, to which every candidate was required to swear obedience, a prominent place was given to the portions dealing with 'Behaviour'. The oldest of our known records—the Regius Manuscript, written about 1390—emphasises the necessity of paying due respect to the Craft. Anderson, in his Book of Constitutions, published by the Grand Lodge of England in 1723, says "You are not to hold private Committees, or separate conversation, without leave from the Master, nor to talk of anything impertinent or unseemly, nor interrupt the Master or Wardens, or any Brother speaking to the Master, nor behave yourself ludicrously or jestingly while the Lodge is engaged in what is serious or solemn; but to pay due Reverence to your Master, Wardens, Fellows and put them to worship", that is, pay them the respect due to them.

Bearing this in mind, the Master of a Lodge must be particular to see that nothing boisterous creeps into the ceremonial work of his Lodge. The Degrees must be conferred not only in as perfect a ritualistic form as is possible, but also with impressiveness. The impression made upon a candidate in his First Degree will remain with him throughout his life. Hums of conversation, restless moving about, have no place in the ceremonial work of any Lodge. Particularly in the conferring of the Master Mason Degree must all crudity and ruffianism be cut out. Neither has any place there.

While the points of etiquette and decorum, which have just been mentioned, are perhaps, the direct responsibility of the Master, there are others, which are the personal responsibility of every member of the Craft. Some of these are dealt with in the succeeding paragraphs.

REGALIA

Scottish Freemasons, in common with the Irish, normally wear the Apron under the coat. Not so long ago this was actually the Law on the matter, but with the advent of double-breasted suits the Law now reads, "Aprons shall be fastened preferably under the coat and worn so that the flap is visible". Every Freemason should be encouraged to have a dress Apron of his own. With constant use an Apron naturally becomes soiled and it should be remembered that Lambskin can easily be cleaned and kept in that condition for many years. Since the Apron is symbolically representative of the life and conduct of the wearer it is naturally a sad reflection on the wearer if it is not kept in a spotless condition. In many Scottish Lodges the Office-bearers wear sashes over the right shoulder and under the left arm. This is a relic of the days when all gentlemen wore swords suspended by a leather or cloth sash.

On entering the Lodge the sword itself was removed but the sash was left in position. The sash is worn over the jacket, not, like the apron, under it.

In some Constitutions it is common for a Brother to wear, at all times, the apron and regalia appropriate to the highest Masonic rank he holds. This is not so in the Scottish Constitution. Even though a Brother holds Grand Lodge rank, or Honorary Grand Lodge rank, he should, when attending his own Lodge, wear the regalia of his Lodge. On no account should two collars be worn at the same time. It has been customary in

Scotland for an Honorary Grand Lodge Office-bearer to wear his jewel of his Honorary Office on a thistle-green ribbon, one and a half inches broad, with his Lodge regalia. The Constitution also states that no regalia or jewels other than those appertaining to Craft Masonry shall be worn at meetings of Grand Lodge, Provincial or District Grand Lodges or Daughter Lodges.

JEWELS

It is the custom in many Lodges to present to the retiring Master a Past Master's Jewel as a mark of appreciation for the work done by him while in the chair of the Lodge. It is but fitting that Past Masters should wear these jewels when attending meetings of the Lodge, which has awarded them. It is not, however, the Scottish custom to wear jewels when wearing Grand Lodge regalia. To this statement there are one or two exceptions. If a Grand Lodge Office-bearer is attending a Lodge in his official capacity he should wear the Past Master's jewel or the Lodge jewel if he is entitled to either of them. It is a mark of respect to the Lodge.

There is nothing to prevent a Brother who is a Past Master of more than one Lodge wearing two or three Past Master's jewels at the same time. Indeed, a Brother may also be a Past Master of a Lodge under another Constitution and be entitled to wear a Past Master's jewel of a Lodge under that Constitution. It too may be worn in a Scottish Lodge. It is entirely a matter for the Brother concerned, remembering that in the Lodge all are Brothers of equal standing and that as little distinction in regalia and jewels as is possible should be the case. It is not, for example, the Scottish custom to wear Grand Lodge or Provincial or District Grand Lodge regalia except on official occasions.

DRESS

The Constitution stipulates that Brethren should when attending Lodge, where possible, wear dark clothes and dark ties. There is nothing sombre or funereal about this, for the colourful Scottish regalia—which is unique in the world of masonry—looks much better against a dark background. Attend your Lodge dressed soberly, for it is a sober business you are about. There is a philosophy in dress, as in so many other things, and the dress proper to Masonic meetings is no exception. Its principle is good taste, its practice is to wear such dress as shows respect to the Brotherhood and expresses the dignity of the Craft.

“BROTHER” IS A TITLE

In the usage of the Scottish Craft 'Brother' is neither a sentimental nor familiar form of address. It is a title—as much as Right Worshipful or Worshipful. A man does not attend his Lodge in his capacity as a private individual; he is not John Frazer or Robert Anderson. He is there in his capacity as a Master Mason—a Brother. For this reason he should always be addressed in open lodge as 'Brother Frazer' or 'Brother Anderson'. It cannot be too strongly stressed that all Scottish Freemasons are Brothers — irrespective

of their rank in the Craft. The Scottish Craft knows no such form of address as 'Right Worshipful Brother' or 'Worshipful Brother', etc. In the Scottish Craft the appellations 'Right Worshipful' and 'Worshipful' are appropriate only to the office, not to the person. When addressing the Master of a Lodge it is correct to address him as 'Right Worshipful Master' and to refer to him as 'Right Worshipful Master, Brother Anderson'. It is incorrect and not in accordance with Scottish Custom to address him as 'Right Worshipful Brother Anderson'. In the same way a Past Master is never, repeat never, addressed as Worshipful Brother John Brown. He is Brother John Brown, Past Master and on a billet—again a Scottish term—his name would be written as Brother John Brown, P.M.

In recent years a habit has grown for Brethren to address each other as 'Brother John' or 'Brother David' and, even worse, to address the Master or visiting Provincial or District Grand Office-bearers in this fashion. Formality in our Lodges and Ceremonials is important as it underlines the solemnity and dignity of our proceedings and therefore a Brother should always be addressed by his surname or family name. e.g. Brother Brown.

The appellation Right Worshipful, Very Worshipful, Worshipful etc., is a form of address when addressing or referring to a Brother of the appropriate rank in the Lodge or at Harmony. There is no such office in the Scottish Craft as Right Worshipful Master or even Most Worshipful Grand Master Mason, the respective offices are Master and Grand Master Mason. When the Office-bearers are listed in a billet or other written material they should be in the form of:

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| Master | Brother John Brown |
| Senior Warden | Brother David White |
| Junior Warden | Brother William Anderson etc. |

It should also be remembered that a Scottish Lodge does not have 'Officers' but 'Office-bearers'.

ENTERING AND LEAVING THE LODGE

A Brother entering the Lodge after it has been opened should advance to a point about mid-way between the altar and the Senior Warden; salute the Master and quietly take his seat. If the Lodge is working in a degree other than the first, only the sign of the degree in which the Lodge is working should be given. 'Working-up' is a custom under the English Constitution but is not Scottish usage. If you are entering your own Lodge, go quietly to a seat. Do not stop to exchange greetings on the way. Remember that the business of the Lodge has begun—and you are late. If you are a visitor, wait for the Director of Ceremonies to introduce you to the Master or conduct you to a seat. If you are a visiting Master or Past Master you will probably be invited to take a seat in the East. Accept this graciously if there is obviously room. If the East seems a little crowded ask the Master's permission to take a seat on the floor of the Lodge.

If you must leave the Lodge before it is closed you should wait until you have an opportunity of rising in your place and asking the Master's permission to retire. This given, you should go to mid-way point above referred to, salute the Master and retire quietly. In some Lodges it is customary on entering or retiring to salute the Wardens

in addition to the Master. In this case salute the Master first, then the Senior Warden and last the Junior Warden.

VISITING ANOTHER LODGE

Visiting another Lodge is a privilege and not a right. A Brother may ask to be admitted to a Lodge as a visitor and he will always be welcome, but he cannot demand to be admitted. That right belongs only to the Grand Master Mason and, in his own Province or District, the Provincial or District Grand Master. The Master of a Lodge is entitled to refuse to admit, as a visitor, any Brother whose presence may, in his opinion, disturb the harmony of the Lodge. He may also ask any visitors to retire if he thinks that the business before the Lodge is of a private nature.

As a visitor, either alone or with a member of the Lodge, be sure to arrive in ample time before the Lodge is opened. It is very discourteous for a visitor to arrive late and if it is necessary to test him it will upset the Lodge business—for some Brother will have to be sent out of the Lodge to carry out this duty. No Brother should resent being tested at any time. Every Master has the duty of seeing that none but Freemasons are present in his Lodge when it is open. It is usual to ask a Past Master to undertake this duty and he should report to the Master that he is satisfied that the visitor is a member of the Craft, a member of a Regular Lodge and not under any Masonic suspension or prohibition. A visitor should be ready to produce his Grand Lodge Diploma if it is asked for. A visitor can only be vouched for if the Brother vouching for him can truthfully say that he has sat with him in open Lodge. A visiting Brother should, if possible, bring his own Regalia with him. Unfortunately, it has been known for a Brother to visit a Lodge whilst not in good standing with his own Lodge. This is contrary to the Constitution. Indeed it is the responsibility of the Lodge receiving the Brother to ensure that he is in good standing. For this reason all visitors should carry with them their receipt for the payment of the current year's test fees, or their Life Membership Cards. As Life Membership is unknown in many other Constitutions, a Brother visiting, say in England, should take with him (a) his Grand Lodge Diploma and (b) his current receipt for test fees or his Life Membership Card together with a letter from the Lodge Secretary stating that Life Membership means that he has commuted his Annual Test Fees in one single payment. It is not in order for a Scottish brother visiting a Lodge to convey the greetings either of Grand Lodge or of the Grand Master Mason unless he has been specifically invited to do so.

ALTAR, LIGHTS AND TRACING BOARDS

The position of the altar varies from Lodge to Lodge. Symbolically it should be cubical in shape, though in practice it is often made oblong. On it are placed the three great Lights of Freemasonry. Since the V.S.L. with the square and compasses thereon really constitute the 'point within a circle' it follows, that the altar should be fairly centrally situated in the Lodge and ideally with the G over it. The altar may be suitably painted or carved provided this is done with good taste. It may be covered with a cloth of the Lodge colour or in the case of a funeral Lodge draped with black crepe. The three Great

Lights, of course, are on top of the cloth. It is interesting to observe in some of our overseas Lodges several different Volumes of the Sacred Law depending upon the religion of the Brethren concerned, placed side by side on the altar, the candidate being obligated on the one peculiar to his religion. There is rather a strange custom in some Lodges of placing the Ballot Box on top of the V.S.L. This is wrong symbolically as it may obscure part of the V.S.L. and perhaps obscures completely, the square and compasses. This may be overcome by placing a small table beside the altar or having a pull-out slide attached to the altar.

Since the three Great Lights constitute the focal point of any Degree, it is felt in Scotland that it is quite in order for a candidate and his conductor to perambulate round the Lodge passing between the altar and the Master. This is mentioned because some Constitutions, for example the Irish, prohibit any Brother from passing between the altar and the Master, the reason possibly being that the Master in the East is in the Place of Light and his vision should not be obscured from the three Great Lights, which are his responsibility.

The position of the three candles or lamps varies from Lodge to Lodge. In some Lodges they are placed in tall candlesticks situated at three of the corners of the square pavement; in others on a candelabra of three lights on the Master's dais whilst a third method is to see them displayed on the pedestals of the Master, Senior Warden and Junior Warden. In some Constitutions quite a feature is made of the lighting of the candles when the Lodge is being opened and indeed the act of lighting may be accompanied by the words Wisdom, Strength and Beauty. In the Scottish Constitution all three candles are lit in the First Degree, one is extinguished in the Second Degree and two are extinguished, leaving only one alight, in the of three lights on the Master's dais whilst a third method is to see them displayed on the pedestals of the Master, Senior Warden and Junior Warden. In some Constitutions quite a feature is made of the lighting of the candles when the Lodge is being opened and indeed the act of lighting may be accompanied by the words Wisdom, Strength and Beauty. In the Scottish Constitution all three candles are lit in the First Degree, one is extinguished in the Second Degree and two are extinguished, leaving only one alight, in the Third Degree.

A symbolism, which has been suggested, is that as the candidate progresses from Degree to Degree he acquires more spiritual light and there is less necessity for material light.

In Scottish Lodges the Tracing Board of the Degree does not lie on the floor. In some Lodges the Tracing Boards are placed on the wall, one being uncovered in each Degree. Other Lodges place them in front of the pedestals of the Junior Warden, Senior Warden and Master respectively. Others place them on an easel in some convenient part of the Lodge. As some of the Tracing Board lectures are somewhat long, there is no objection to the candidate being seated during this lecture.

SIGNS, SALUTATIONS AND RISINGS

Grand Lodge has never legislated regarding signs, but there are some signs, or manner of giving signs, which might be regarded as intrinsically Scottish. For example, a great

number of Lodges made use of the Due Guard sign. The Brethren stand in this position while the Lodge is being opened in the First Degree. Many regard this as being more fundamental than standing with the Penal sign, which is also given. Within Scotland itself, every Mason will automatically adopt the sign of Fidelity when he stands in Lodge. In other Constitutions, the Brethren only use this sign when a prayer is being offered or a candidate is taking his obligation. If at the business part of a Meeting, a Brother addresses the Chair, he should rise, give the sign of the Degree, return to the sign of Fidelity, make his address, and before sitting down give again, the sign of the Degree. Finally, the Grand or Royal Sign with which is associated Grand Honours is always given three times. The manner of doing this is absolutely uniform throughout Scotland and is always accompanied by the words 'All Glory to The Most High'.

How many salutes should be given to the Grand Master Mason, Grand Secretary, etc., when entering a Lodge? The answer is none. The only occasion when the Grand Master Mason is saluted—and once only as a Master Mason—is on the occasion of his Installation when he is proclaimed by the Grand Director of Ceremonies. This point is stressed because in some Constitutions there is a specified number of salutes for a Brother with 'Most Worshipful', a lesser number for 'Right Worshipful' rank and so on.

After the usual business of the Lodge has been transacted, it is not the custom in Scotland to have 'risings' at the first of which the Master asks "I rise for the first time to ask if anyone in this Lodge has aught for the good of Freemasonry in general or this Lodge in particular?"

The usual formula in Scotland is: —

R.W.M.—Worshipful Junior Warden, have you any further business in the South?

W.J.W. —No further business in the South, Right Worshipful Master (or, if he has, he states this first).

R.W.M.—Worshipful Senior Warden, have you any further business in the West?

W.S.W. —No further business in the West, Right Worshipful Master.

R.W.M.—Any further business in the East? (If none, the I.P.M. replies as above.)

R.W.M.—Any further business on the floor of the Lodge (waits and may receive Reports, Greetings, etc.).

R.W.M.—There being no further business, be upstanding Brethren and assist me to close the Lodge.

WORK IN THE LODGE

It is essential that a candidate's name be mentioned as frequently as possible in a Ceremony. He is not simply a candidate or a number, but someone with his own name and personality. At the very outset, the Inner Guard should report in these terms "At the door of the Lodge stands John Smith, a poor candidate... etc.", Even if there are three candidates for initiation, all their names should be given and not simply described as "three candidates". As the whole essence of our Ritual is to impress upon the candidate that all Freemasons are on the level, all instruction should be carried out on the level—on the floor of the Lodge. If the Master has work to do such as giving the obligation or communicating the secrets, he should leave his Chair on the dais and come to the floor of the Lodge. If, when the candidate is being conducted round the Lodge, he has to salute

the Master, the Deacon should see that he halts, turns to face the Master, salutes, turns again and proceeds with his perambulation. It is not Scottish usage to 'salute when passing' by which is meant to give the sign while still on the move, simply glancing sideways towards the Master when so doing. It has been noted that in some Lodges the Brethren slap the right knee at the conclusion of a given piece of ritual. This is a meaningless habit and should be discontinued.

AT HARMONY

'Even at Harmony' or as it is called elsewhere 'The Festive Board' there are certain Masonic customs. When His Majesty King George VI was alive the first loyal toast within Scotland was 'The King and The Craft'. It is felt that it would now be appropriate to have two loyal toasts firstly 'The Queen' and secondly 'The Craft'. As there are a great many Scottish Lodges overseas in different countries it is left to the individual Lodge to decide on the form of loyal toast most acceptable to the country concerned. In Scotland the third loyal toast is 'The Grand Lodge of Scotland'. It is noteworthy that the toast is to the corporate body and not to the Grand Master Mason.

It naturally follows that, as there is no specific toast to the Grand Master Mason, there is likewise no toast to the Depute Grand Master, the Substitute Grand Master or to Grand Office-bearers. Throughout Scotland it is common to have 'Masonic Honours' following the proposal of a toast. In other Constitutions this is called 'Masonic fire'. For example, following the proposal of the toast to The Grand Lodge of Scotland, the Master of the Lodge would say: —

"Masonic Honours, Brethren, for Grand Lodge,

Count, Wardens, count, one, two, three".

Senior Warden says "Once, twice, thrice".

Junior Warden says "One, two, three".

Thereupon the Brethren give one of the many 'three times three' form of hand-clapping, followed each time by three hurrahs.

It should be noted that the phrase 'Point, left, right' is not used in Scotland for Masonic honours. Of recent years a few Lodges in Scotland have adopted the custom of certain groups of Brethren in England and Ireland of 'drinking wine with the Master'.

This is most certainly not Scottish usage and this practice is deprecated.

Finally, after the Tyler has given his toast "Here's to all poor and distressed masons", etc., Masonic honours are not accorded but the Master says—"Happy to meet" (repeated by Brethren); "Sorry to part" (repeated by Brethren); "Hoping to meet again" (repeated by Brethren). Sometimes the last phrase is altered to "Happy to meet again".

Brethren should also bear in mind that Harmony after a Lodge Meeting is a continuation of the Meeting so although a relaxed and social atmosphere is appropriate, and indeed desirable, - loud, coarse or intemperate behaviour is unacceptable