

2006/1625

QUESTION AND ANSWER.

WYCHE LODGE NO. 3638. 1974

1. Q. Should the J.W. be responsible for proving visitors.

A. The Responsibility for the admission of visitors is primarily with the J.W., who is so directed at his investiture. But ultimate responsibility rests with the W.M., who undertakes, at his Installation, that no Visitor shall be received 'without due examination, and producing proper Vouchers of his having been initiated in a regular Lodge'. If the J.W. is on duty in the Lodge, the W.M. may delegate the D.C., or one or more P.Ms. to act as examiners, and they who become, in a sense, the 'proper Vouchers', when they are satisfied. The examination should cover adequately all the Craft Degrees that the visitor claims to hold. If the result is not wholly satisfactory, admission should be refused.

Methods: Ask for the signs, Tokens and Words of the three Degrees. The visitor may be hesitant, or not wholly correct in his answers. He may even be a non-Mason who has obtained his information from some irregular source. The examination should be extended to include one or two procedural questions relating to specific details in the ceremonies. But there is a useful additional check.
2. Ask the name and number of the visitors Lodge, with the place and dates of Meetings. (All these can be checked instantly in the G.L. Year Book, which the Secretary should have.) This is one reason why all brethren should be able to vouch for their visitors, and for which all invitations should be conducted via. the Lodge Secretary.

2. Q. Should the J.D. bow after displaying the T.B.'s.

A. After due search I have been unable to find any specific instruction on this in any of the rituals. In my own opinion, I feel that this is quite unnecessary, the board should be turned and the Deacon then turns and proceeds back to his chair. The procedure is left to that of the normal custom of the Lodge.

3. Q. Is it correct for the I.G. to step outside the Lodge when a meeting or ceremony is in progress.

A. The instruction in the ritual states 'the I.G. should not step over the threshold of the Lodge when he admits a candidate', he should also be in charge of the opening and closing of the door. In this Lodge the I.G. answers the door according to the Knocks, though in other Lodges it is their custom to look through the Peep Hole first.

4. Q. Is it necessary for the S. or J.Ws. chair to be occupied by a P.M. when they have vacated the chair to undertake another duty which is part of the ceremony.

A. It is not at all important; If your particular working of the ritual (or perhaps simple Lodge custom) requires that someone occupies the Chair while one or both Wardens do some part of their Masonic Duties on the floor of the Lodge, I would not quarrel with that; I can only assure you that it is quite unnecessary for the Chair to be occupied by any kind of deputy on such occasions. One would never dream of filling the S.W. and J.W. Chairs when those two officers leave their places to come onto the floor of the Lodge during the Closing in the Third Degree for example.

When either of the Wardens has to leave the Temple, for any reason at all, then it is proper for the W.M. to ask someone to fill the Chair pro tempore.

5. Q. Could you inform us as to what the medal or jewel is on the W.Ms. Collar.

A. The jewel that you refer to is the Commemorative Jewel of the M.W. Grand Master's 250th Anniversary Fund, and it signifies that this Lodge donated to that fund the sum of £1 per member of the Lodge at that date. (The sum total collected was over half a million pounds.)

The design of the jewel embodies the central theme of the Arms first granted to the 'Hole Crafte & Felawship of Masons' in 1472, a grant which marked the highest form of official recognition of the Craft, as one of the City Companies.

A field of Sable, a Chevron of Silver, grailed,
Three Castles of the same, garnished with doors and windows of the field.
In the Chevron, a Compass of Black.

This description comes from the text of the Grant, which gives us the earliest description of the design in Black and Silver, and, since 1472, the arms reappear regularly with occasional minor modification - in all sorts of Masonic documents.

The original grant contained no motto, and the earliest record of a motto attached to the arms appears on the tomb of William Kerwin, dated 1594, in St. Helens Church, Bishopsgate. It reads:

"God Is Our Guide"

The Company indeed has no authorised motto, but since the early 17th century, it appears to have used the words:

"In The Lord Is All Our Trust"

There is evidence that the premier Grand Lodge, founded in 1717, began using the Arms within a few years after its foundation, even though early minute books are silent on this subject. They were certainly using the Arms in their seal before 1813, and soon after the Union of the rival Grand Lodges was accomplished in that year, the Arms of the United Grand Lodge were designed so that half the shield contained the same 'Three Castles, Chevron and Compass' while the arms of 'Antients' - 'A Man, A lion, An Ox, and an Eagle', completed the other half.

Thus, the Grand Master's 250th Anniversary Jewel actually spans the history of our ancient Craft over a period of nearly 500 years, since 1472. But the roots of the Fellowship of Masons in England go back much further than that, to the year 1356, when 12 skilled master masons came before the Mayor and Aldermen at Guildhall, in London, to settle a demarcation dispute, and to draw up a code of trade regulations, because their trade had not, until then, 'been regulated in due manner, by the government of folks of their trade, in such form as other trades' were.

This was the true beginning of mason trade organisation in England, which gave rise to the 'Hole Crafte and Felawship of Masons', later the London Masons Company.

So, nearly 500 years after the Arms were first granted, the Grand Lodge celebrated its 250th Anniversary with a gift of over half a million pounds to be devoted to research into science and surgery, under the Royal College of Surgeons for the benefit of all mankind. Let us hope that in 250 years from now the Craft - still flourishing - will mark the occasion in a similar manner - and 'prove to the world the happy and beneficial effects of our ancient and honourable Institution. At the Quarterly Communication each June a report is made to Grand Lodge on the progress made during the year by the Surgeons etc. who have been awarded scholarships through this fund.

6. Q. Should the V.S.L. be placed so that it can be read by the W.M. or the Candidate?
- A. The V.S.L. is an essential part of the Lodge when in session, and there is no specific rule as to which way it should be turned. But when it is to be used by a Candidate for the purpose of taking an Obligation, it becomes in a certain sense his book. Our Lodges are required to provide for each Candidate that particular version of Holy Writ which belongs to his faith, and for the Obligation, at least, there can be no doubt that that Book should be so arranged that he can recognize and read it.
7. Q. When the Square and Compasses are displayed on the V.S.L., should the points of the Compasses be towards the W.M. or towards the West.
- A. This is one of those old vexed questions upon which the Grand Lodge has never made a ruling. Both arrangements are to be seen in different Lodges, and, of course, it is possible to develop good symbolical reasons in favour of either practice.

Perhaps the most useful guide that can be given on this question is the actual practice of the Grand Lodge when in session. There, the V.S.L. faces towards the West, and the Compass points face the west (so that the arms of the square are roughly parallel with the position of a Candidates' feet). It should be noted that Grand Lodge does not insist that this is the only correct arrangement, but where there is doubt I would suggest that their practice is the best to be followed.

8. Q. What is the definition and origin of the Masonic Term "Lewis", and what are his privileges, if any.

A. Lewis: "An iron contrivance for the raising of heavy blocks of stone" (O.E.D.) Three metal parts (i.e., two wedge - shaped side pieces and a straight central piece), which are set into a prepared hole in a stone. When bolted into position the metal parts form a dovetailed grip inside the stone, and a metal eye or shackle, attached at the exposed end, enables the block to be easily hoisted. The origin of the term "Lewis" is obscure. It appears in mediaeval architectural usage as 'Lowes and Lowys, but several notable authorities have examined the possibility that our form is derived from the French word Louve (* she-wolf) which can be traced to French usage in 1611 and 1676, where they have the same Architectural meaning as the English word "lewis". In Speculative Masonic usage, "A Lewis is the uninitiated son of a Mason" According to (Bd. of Gen Purposes; Points of Procedure), the word has had this meaning in the Craft since 1738, if not earlier. As to the privileges, the following extract from a letter written by the then Grand Secretary, Bro. Sidney White, on May 24th, 1945, describes the situation under the Grand Lodge of England;

" A Lewis is the son of a Mason, irrespective of the time of his birth. He has no privileges other than that he may claim seniority should there be more than one Candidate Initiated on one and the same day."

9.Q. What is meant by the Length of my Cable-tow.

A. This is a comparatively modern symbolical allusion to ancient operative practice by which masons were obliged to attend the (Annual) assemblies if they were within a specified distance. The earliest documents belonging to the Craft, i.e. the MS. Constitutions (or Ancient Charges), usually contained regulations on this subject, e.g. The Regius Ms., c 1390, prescribed attendance except in case of sickness or reasonable excuse. The Cooke Ms., c 1410, only excused attendance if in "perillie of death". Neither of these texts specified any particular distance, but later versions stated the number of miles within which attendance was obligatory, e.g., in two newly discovered versions of the Constitutions now in the care of the Grand Lodge Library, the earliest text, c 1625, demands attendance within seven miles, and a later one specifies fifty miles. In most cases the distances vary from five to 50 miles.

The Dumfires No.4 MS., c. 1710, has a question in the catechism:-

Q. How w^re you brought in.

A. shamefully wt a rope about my neck.

Pritchard in 1730, mentioned " the lenght of a Cable-rope from shore...." as part of one of the penalties in his Obligation.

These are indications of the way in which the rope may have come into our ceremonies, and they probably bear quite seperate symbolical explanations, But when a candidate undertakes to attend the Lodge, if within the length of his cable-tow, he is making a simple promise to attend so long as it is in his poer to d^o

10. Q. What are "Cowans" and why were they excluded from the Craft.

A. The O.E.D. definition is: "One who builds dry stone walls (e.i., without mortar); a dry-stone-dyker; applied derogatorily to one who does the work of a mason, but who has not been regularly apprenticed or bred to the trade.

Cowan is an essentially Scottish trade term, and it belongs to the time when lodges, as trade-controlling bodies, put restrictions against the employment of cowans, in order to protect the fully-trained men of the Craft. The earliest official ban against cowans appeared in the Schaw Statutes in 1598:-

"Item, that no master of fellow of the craft received any cowans to work in his society or company nor send any of his servants to work with cowans, under the penalty of twenty pounds so often as any person offends hereunder."

But there are numerous records of breaches of this regulation. The minutes of Lodge Mother Kilwinning, in 1705, indicate that, though still restricted, the employment of cowans was permissible in certain cases, depending on the supply of labour.

The Lodge agreed:-

" that no man shall employ a cowan ... if there be one mason to be found within 15 miles he is not to employ a cowan under the penalty of forty shillings, Scots."

The same regulation contains the famous definition of a cowan as one "..... without the word".

In the burgh of the Cannogate (adjoining Edinburgh), cowans had a higher status, and were granted Freedom, with powers to work in stone or clay, but without lime, and although these restrictions were varied from time to time, they were enforced, and penalties were levied when a cowan worked in materials beyond those permitted to him.

11. Q. Why is the Junior Warden described as the "Ostensible Steward of the Lodge"

A. The answer hinges on the fact that from about 1600 onwards, when we begin to have two Wardens in the Lodge, the J.W.'s principal duty seems to have related to the itinerant masons, visitors, etc. Much later, in the 1770's when we get first details of the actual words of the Investiture of Officers, those duties relating to the care of visitors, etc., are allocated to the J.W. in print, and this continues into the middle decades of the 19th Century.

Stewards, responsible for the organisation of Lodge feasting and feeding are recorded in the 1720's and this suggests the possibility of confusion in the duties of Stewards and Junior Warden. Nobody seems to have worried about this until "Emulation" took the matter up - and in 1906 (that is very late in deed, but I cannot find it in earlier rituals) they introduced the little speech in the Investiture telling the J.W. that he was (or is) the "Ostensible Steward of the Lodge" i.e. because of his duties in regard to Visitors. The Stewards are still Stewards; the J.W. is a kind of artificial Steward, in the right of his ancient duties. I believe that Emulation is the only working to use this phrase.

12. Q. Why two Knocks for the Tyler.

A. This is of recent origin, The knocks have no significance, with the Craft, and like other knocks are not answered by the Wardens, and the Tyler cannot come into the Lodge unless the I.G. allows him to do so. This form of summing the Tyler is unauthorised, but as it is a practice which has been used by most Lodges for a considerable time, it has become what one might say a recent innovation which has not been deprecated by Grand Lodge. In my own opinion, I would not be prepared to say that it was wrong.

It may have developed from the fact, that all knocks with a total of three are associated with our ritual, one knock on the door was always associated with an alarm, may be when this came into being, two was used to differentiate from the others.

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