

SCOTTISH TRADITIONS & MASONIC USAGES

*Lecture by Bro. Dato Dr. Peter C. Vanniasingham
PM, Past DGM, Hon. G.S. Warden, Hon.
PGD(I.C.), PDSGW(E.A.)*

This lecture is based on an article by a distinguished Mason, Bro. George Draffen, who was S.G.M., and which was published in the Transactions of the Quator Coronati Lodge of 2076 E.C. and also from an article in the Scottish Year Book of 1966.

Traditions, customs and usages have been the hallmark of the Scottish Craft and, in fact, after G.L.S. was constituted in 1736, it had no written constitution till 100 years later in 1836 and that too it was for Constitutions and govt. of G.L. itself and not for provincial G.L. or Lodges themselves.

Individual lodges had their own bye-laws and these traditions and customs were handed down to their members.

Regalia

The most striking example of the individuality of Scottish Lodges is their regalia. Every Scottish Lodge could choose their own colours and, until the early 1800s, the sizes also varied. However, since then, the size was laid down and, in recent years, Lodges tended to avoid green and gold, the colours of G.L. and P.G.L. or D.G.L. regalia though there is no prohibition in use. Lodge St. John in Bangkok uses green and gold too.

Aprons are worn under the jacket but the flap must be visible. With the advent of double-breasted jackets, this is only possible if worn over the jacket. The single breast jacket should not be buttoned so that the flap is visible.

Most Scottish Lodges wear a sash over the right shoulder and under the left arm - a relic when swords were worn by gentlemen. On entering a Lodge, the sword was taken out of the frog and

the sashes were kept on. The name of the Lodge may be embroidered on the sash and nothing else.

In some Constitutions, it is common for a Brother to wear at all times the apron and regalia appropriate to the highest Masonic Rank. This is never so in the Scottish Constitution. Even if a Brother holds G.L. rank or Hon. Grand Rank or Dist. or Prov. Grand Rank, he should, when attending his own Lodge, wear the regalia of his Lodge unless he is visiting in an official capacity.

He may, however, wear his G.L. or D.G.L. regalia when visiting another Lodge.

He may wear a collarette with his Hon. Grand Rank with his Lodge Regalia.

Jewels

It is an unwritten rule that no jewels are worn with District or G.L. regalia. There are exceptions to this rule. If he is visiting, in his official capacity as a G.L. or D.G.L. office bearer, a lodge of which he is a member or Hon. member, he should wear the jewels of that Lodge or the P.M. jewel of that Lodge if he is entitled to wear them as a mark of respect to that Lodge. The collarette with the Hon. Grand Rank should also be worn.

There is nothing to prevent a brother who is a PM of more than one Lodge from wearing 2 or 3 PM jewels at the same time in a Scottish Lodge, even if he is a PM of a Lodge under a different constitution.

There is a subtle distinction in a Scottish Lodge between a PM of the Lodge and a PM in the Lodge.

The levels on the apron are badge of office and not rank. This means that a PM of another Lodge cannot wear levels on the apron of the Lodge he joins. He can only wear the MM apron of that joining Lodge, though he would be afforded courtesies as a PM.

This also applies to GL and DGL as levels on the apron can only be worn by the GMM, PGM, DGM & Past DGM, the rest having rosettes and the badge of office on the flap.

Titles

In Scottish usages, every mason is a Brother. It is a title as much as RWM.

There is no such person as a RW Brother, V. Worshipful or Worshipful whatever.

These appellations are for the office and not the individual. In addressing the Master of a Lodge, he is addressed as RWM and to refer to him as RWM Bro. so-and-so. A PM is NOT & NEVER referred to as W. Bro. He is Brother so-and-so PM.

Office Bearers

All office bearers are elected except the DM and SM. The lodge committee recommends a list but, notwithstanding, anyone can be proposed from the floor, unlike other constitutions where the Master appoints.

In the Scottish Constitutions, one does not have to be a Warden or rise up in various offices to be nominated as Master and there is no time limit to holding office in a Lodge and can be re-elected as long as the Lodge cares to do so.

Rituals

Scottish Lodges have a wide variety of ritual working. G.L. has never laid down any standard ceremonial working with two exceptions:

- (1) Ceremony of an Installed Master, DG or Prov. Grand Master Ceremony of Rededication.
- (2) Official ritual for the Mark Degree by implication for G.L. does not publish a ritual for this

degree but uses the ritual published by Supreme Grand Chapter.

The greatest effect that tradition has made in Scottish Craft was the working of the Mark Degree as a recognized part of the making of the Scottish Mason.

G.L. has authorized the Degree of E.A., Fellow of Craft (including the mark) and the M.M. and no other. There is no mention of the Royal Arch Degree. Before 1863, G.L. did not recognize the Mark Degree but some Lodges were working it.

The whole matter came to a head when a PGM of Glasgow suspended a Lodge for working it. The Lodge appealed to G.L. and G.L. upheld the appeal. From that time, every Scottish Lodge was entitled to work that degree but only on M.M. and their names must be registered in the books of G.L. before it can be conferred. G.L., however, by its Constitutions & Laws forbids working more than one degree at anyone meeting.

Altar Lights & Tracing Board

The position of the altar varies from lodge to lodge. On it lies the three great Lights of Freemasonry and constitutes the power within a circle and ideally it is in the centre with the G above it. In Scottish Lodges, the lights in the Master & Wardens pedestal are lit in accordance with the degree as the further we advance the less external light is required as more spiritual or internal light we receive.

Tracing board is also not on the floor but on an easel in a convenient part of the Lodge.

Signs & Salutations

Grand Lodge has never legislated regarding signs but there are signs or manner in giving signs, which may be regarded as intrinsically Scottish.

For example, the Due Guard the position the Brethren stand in during the opening.

Then also the sign of Fidelity when the VSL is open. In other Constitutions, this is given during a prayer only, or when an obligation is being taken.

Whenever a Brother addresses the R WM, he gives the sign of the Degree and returns to S off and returns the sign before sitting.

The G & R.S. is always given three times and accompanied by the words attached to it.

The question is asked as to how many salutes should be given. In Scottish Freemasonry, there are no specific numbers of salutes to anybody. The only time the GMM is saluted and that too only ONCE is when he is proclaimed by the Grand D of C and the same applies to the DGM and R WM on their proclamation by the D of C.

When visiting a Lodge of another Constitution where a number of salutes are given according to rank, there is always the problem of how Scottish Masons wearing their own Regalia should do. There are several suggestions offered but, to me, the only rational thing is to do according to the dictates of your Apron, that is once and, perhaps, as a mark of courtesy, stand at Due Guard or S of F.

Brethren of other Constitutions do not always stand with S of F in Scottish Lodges, nor give the G & R.S. three times and say the words we do as in our Constitution.

Whenever, during opening and closing, the RWM says "I acknowledge the Correctness of the Sign", all signs are dropped and returned to S of F. There is no further need to be in a saluting stance, as the Master has acknowledged that everyone in the Lodge is of that degree.

Scottish Lodges do not have risings, but closing is according to the way we do in Scotia.

Work in the Lodge

All floor work is done on the level i.e. the floor of the Lodge.

If the Master has to be saluted in a perambulation as in English Lodges, the Brother should stop, face the Master, salute and then proceed. There is no such thing as saluting in passing as is seen in English Constitution Lodges. All workings must be done with dignity and in an impressive manner. Nothing boisterous should creep into a ceremony as this will remain engraved in a candidate's memory.

Precedence

In Grand Lodge proceedings 1985-86 No.3, the Committee on Laws & Ruling considered the following:

(Question) In South Africa, there are four Constitutions - English, Irish, South African & Scottish. Guidance was sort on precedence for receiving visitors. Should they be received in seniority of Rank held or the Constitution they represent?

(Answer) The rank held should determine the precedence; if there are two visitors of equal rank from different Constitutions, then the seniority of the Constitution should be taken into account. Representatives of the Scottish Constitution visiting elsewhere should expect to be received in accordance with the Custom of the Constitution being visited.

At Harmony

In Scottish Lodges, the dinner is referred to as Harmony, not Festive Board or Banquet.

Toasts other than loyal toasts to the Sovereign or Head of State are to the body corporate and not to individuals.

Toast to the Grand Lodge of Scotland is not to the GMM though he may wish to respond. The same applies to Provincial or District Grand Lodges.

There is no specific drinking wine with the Master as in other Constitutions.

Throughout Harmony, there must be decorum. Anecdotes, jokes in poor taste, offensive stories and the like are never to be part of a Masonic occasion.

The W.J.W. should ascertain details of visitors and arrange for one to reply to the toast of the visitors.

In some instances, Brethren are seen walking about and chatting with others at another table during Harmony. This should not happen as it disturbs the Harmony.

In Lodges in Scotland, during Harmony, many a Brother may rise to give a solo, play an instrument, hence the reference to the dinner as Harmony.

Finally, Scottish Lodges are very independent, a fact G.L. is well aware of and, in any referral to G.L. for a ruling, the reply will always be an advice and never laid down as a Law or Rule, and leave it to the good sense of the Lodge.

I have, in this limited lecture, pointed out Scottish traditions and usages. There are other rules of etiquette which are observed by masons of all constitutions which may be the basis for another lecture.