

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE TYLER BY

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As appears to be the case with ceremonials, the duties of the Tyler tend to vary from Lodge to Lodge and sometimes even among Lodges using the same Ritual.

Before dealing with the duties of the Tyler, however, it may be useful to reflect on the authority for, as well as the manner of, his appointment to office. **Rule 104** of the Book of Constitutions provides that the Regular Officers of a Lodge – that is to say those Officers whom the Lodge **must** appoint, as distinct from those which the Lodge **may** appoint – shall be:

The Master
The two Wardens
A Treasurer
A Secretary
Two Deacons
An Inner Guard and
A Tyler.

In accordance with that same rule, the Office of Tyler is the only one which may be held by a Brother who is not a subscribing member of the Lodge, and in that case he must have been elected to the Office by the Brethren of the Lodge and may be paid for performing his duties. Otherwise, there is a procedure – followed by some Lodges in this District – by which he can be appointed by the Master of the Lodge but must in that case be a subscribing member of the Lodge and may not be paid for performing his duties. In any case **Rule 113** stipulates that he must be a Master Mason and registered as such in the books of the United Grand Lodge of England. It may perhaps be worth noting at this point that, in relation to Grand Lodge, the Grand Tyler like the Grand Secretary, is not necessarily appointed (by the Grand Master) at the Annual Installation. **Rule 23** states *that “the Grand Tyler shall be an Installed Master. He shall be appointed by the Grand Master as a vacancy occurs and shall continue in office during the pleasure of the Grand Master”*.

Another perhaps interesting provision of **Rule 104** is that – notwithstanding the practice in some Lodges, to appoint only Past Masters (eg. Immediate Past Master during the previous year) to the Office of Tyler – that Office is at the very bottom of the table of precedence of Offices of the Lodge.

It would seem that there are essentially three categories of Tyler in English Freemasonry, namely:

- a) A Brother (usually appointed by the Master) taking progressive Office (remember, the Tyler is at the very bottom of the list) in a situation where the Office is a progressive one leading next to Inner Guard.
- b) An experienced Brother, often a Past Master, elected (or appointed) to perform the functions of Tyler.
- c) A professional Tyler who will in fact often act for several different Lodges and who is invariably paid for his services.

Whichever category he falls into, our Tyler's place is outside the door of the Lodge armed with a drawn sword. What, then, are the Tyler's duties? Chambers 20th century dictionary describes him as a “Freemasons' Doorkeeper” or “Keeper of the Door of a Freemasons' Lodge”. Near enough, it may be said. Our various Rituals are somewhat more explicit. Emulation, for example, prescribes the Tyler's duties as follows as they are explained to him by the Master of the Lodge at Investiture:

“To see that the Candidates are properly prepared and to give the proper reports on the door of the Lodge when Candidates, members or visitors require admission. I therefore place in your hand this sword to enable you to keep off all intruders and cowans to Masonry and suffer none, to pass but such as are duly qualified.” (cowan is a stonemason who has never served an apprenticeship or, more appropriately, one who tries to enter a Freemason's Lodge surreptitiously).

As has been pointed out on innumerable occasions, Freemasonry is not a Secret Society but we do have a special significance – functionally and otherwise – for us which we prize and jealously guard. For this and other reasons, therefore, our Ceremonies and our Lodges need to be appropriately tyled.

From what has been said it is clear that in the performance of his duties the Tyler needs to know what are the “proper reports” to give “on the door of the lodge”. Clearly, also, he has to be capable of identifying cowans, intruders, eavesdroppers and the like and, correspondingly, to be able to recognize those who are “duly qualified” to enter the Lodge. Incidentally, it is not only cowans and intruders whom he must keep off. It may be necessary for him also to deny entry to a Brother, otherwise duly qualified, who may however be in such condition as to raise a reasonable presumption that his presence in the Lodge would be very likely to seriously disturb the proceedings of the Lodge. It must be said, however, that unless the circumstances are inappropriate he must of course defer to the judgment and authority of the Junior Warden in such matters.

In the above connection, while it is the Junior Warden's duty to see that all Masons who desire to enter the Lodge are properly clothed and regaled, it is often the Tyler on whom the responsibility devolves, such as in the case of latecomers. For example, and as is generally known, only Craft and Royal Arch jewels are permitted to be worn in English Craft Lodges and the Tyler needs to be able to recognize these jewels. In that regard, permitted Breast Jewels are:

1. Past Master's Jewels
2. Founders' Jewels of Craft Lodges and R.A. Chapters
3. Permanent Grand Lodge Charity Jewels
4. District Grand Charity Jewels
5. Other Charity Jewels valid for the year in which they were earned
6. Festival Jewels unique to the Province which issued them
7. Q.C.C.C. Membership Jewels
8. Lodge and Chapter Centenary and Bicentenary Jewels.
9. Hall Stone Jewels
10. RA Chapter Jewel of the Order
11. RA PZ Jewels
12. Past Provincial or District Jewels
13. O.S.M.

The Tyler would also have to remember that Aprons and Collars of Officers of other Lodges – complete with circle and insignia of Office – should not be worn in his Lodge. Rather, plain aprons should be worn except, of course, in the case of Grand Officers, Provincial and District Grand Officers and holders of London Grand Rank.

The Tyler, as has already been pointed out, must “see that the Candidates are properly prepared”. In that regard, the Tyler in most if not all Lodges, in fact assists in the preparation of the Candidate including dressing him appropriately in strict conformity with the requirements of the Ritual with assistance of senior Brethren. In the “York Rite” in that connection the peculiar problems in the Ceremony of Initiation, of metal including rings and the tying of the HW with the CT down the back (not the front) also need to be addressed. The Tyler has to ensure also that Entered Apprentices who have, of course, been “asked to retire” are not able to see the preparation of the Candidate for the Fellow Craft Degree and similarly for Fellow Crafts with respect to the Master Mason Degree.

In respect of the exchanges “at the door of the Lodge” between himself and the Inner Guard during ceremonies of Initiation, Passing and Raising the Tyler must remember that such exchanges must be audible to all within the Lodge room.

But the Tyler with his drawn sword has also a very important symbolic significance and a very pivotal duty. In the LOGIC and TAYLOR Rituals, for example, this symbolic or moral duty is communicated by the Master to the Tyler with his sword.

“This sword morally teaches us to set a guard over our thoughts, a watch at our lips and to post a sentinel over all our actions; thereby preventing the approach of any unworthy thought, word or deed thus preserving conscience void of offence towards God and man”.

In some Lodges, it is the Tyler’s duty to see that all Brethren sign the attendance book in that regard to ensure that the host of a guest signs also that he vouches for that guest.

Finally, the Festive Board: While it is true that the Tyler need not give the Tyler’s Toast, or that if he does give it he need not stand behind the Worshipful Master, in Lodges in Guyana it is considered the Tyler’s duty to give the Toast and in so doing to stand behind the Worshipful Master, his left hand on the Master’s shoulder. He should give the Toast and then raise his glass and repeat the first line *“To all Poor and distressed Masons”* and may continue *“wherever dispersed over the face of earth or water etc…….”*