



Lodge Tullibardine

A Little Touch of Scotland in Brisbane's Masonic World

Lodge 227 United Grand Lodge of Queensland

Understanding the 'Freedom of the Lodge' ...

In today's Freemasonry we often hear the term "*Freedom of the Lodge*"

Sadly it is a term that is not understood by many and is rarely used correctly.

You will have heard brethren preparing to give a presentation to the Lodge request the Master for the "*the freedom of the Lodge*".

Such a request is unnecessary. Worse still most Masters grant it, and that too is not correct. Simply put it is a phrase that should not be used. We were all given the "*freedom of the Lodge*" on our initiation, and the use of the term begins and ends there.

All who move within a "Tyled" Lodge are bound by its protocols. There can be no relaxation of these requirements and it is clear that a Lodge is either "tyled" or it is "un-tyled"- there is no in-between.

We all should appreciate that at the first sound of the gavel in the East, the brethren take their places and the Lodge comes "to order". This means that everyone is seated unless rising to perform an office addressing the Worshipful Master, or being addressed by him.

Likewise, from this point on it is part of a mason's personal discipline **not** to hold private discussions in a tyled Lodge, and it is quite improper for two or more brethren to engage each other in private conversation (*whispered or otherwise*), unless directed by the Worshipful Master.

This silence is a courtesy to all brethren present.

During ceremonials **only** the participants are to speak. The cooperation of every one present in the room is critical and expected.

Not-with-standing this, there are times when the unforeseen occurs and there are unexpected delays in the meeting/ceremonial.

At these times, and only these times, the Master may give the brethren a temporary relaxation of the basic requirement not to engage in private conversation.

It may be that he simply says, "**Brethren, please feel free to talk among yourselves**".

Given this relaxation of established protocol, the brethren may now talk quietly with those sitting adjacent to them.

This relaxation of etiquette refers to speech only and does not absolve the brethren from a strict observance of all other Masonic protocols. All movement within the Lodge-room is to be in accord with established usage and custom (*squaring the Lodge etc*) and freely wandering around the room is not permitted.

If addressing the Wor. Master during this time, all due deference is to be given his office and salutes are to **precede** conversation with the Master.

Once the unexpected delay has been resolved, at the first sound of the gavel in the East, the brethren cease private conversation and the Lodge comes "to order" once more.

This means that brethren once again observe the rule of silence.

If you are undertaking a presentation within the Lodge, and you require a relaxation of the accepted protocols,

then the best way to achieve this is to have previously requested the Master to "Close the Lodge" on completion of the formal business of the meeting. With the Lodge closed the presentation may be given with a freedom of movement not available in a "tyled" lodge.

It is inappropriate to have the lodge "Call-Off" so that a presentation may be made. When "Called Off" the Lodge goes from "Labour to Refreshment", not from "Labour to Labour". No Masonic presentations may be made when the Lodge is "Called off".

I am sure that you will agree that we are all obliged to abide by and support the Ancient Usages and Customs of the Fraternity and to preserve our traditions.

Preserving our traditions is a responsibility that should not be taken lightly. It entails a stewardship of ensuring that our Ritual and Ceremonies continue as they have done for nearly 300 years.

The very essence of what we hold revered in Masonry lies in our symbols, customs and pageantry and the niceties with which we as Freemasons interact with each other.

The term, "*Freedom of the Lodge*" is history, let us leave it there.

Enjoy your Freemasonry brethren, it's a great place to be and a better way to live.

