



Masonic Lodge Officers

This article relates to mainstream 'Craft Freemasonry', sometimes known as 'Blue Lodge Freemasonry'. Every Masonic Lodge elects or appoints **Masonic Lodge Officers** to execute the necessary functions of the lodge's life and work. The precise list of such offices may vary between the jurisdictions of different Grand Lodges, although certain factors are common to all, and others are usual in most. All of the lodges in a given nation, state, or region are united under the authority of a Grand Lodge sovereign to its own jurisdiction. Most of the lodge offices listed below have equivalent offices in the Grand Lodge, but with the addition of the word 'Grand' somewhere in the title. For example, every lodge has a 'Junior Warden', whilst the Grand Lodge has a 'Grand Junior Warden' or 'Junior Grand Warden'. A very small number of offices may exist only at the Grand Lodge level - such offices are included at the end of this article. There are few universal rules common to all Grand Lodge jurisdictions of Freemasonry (see Masonic Landmarks for accepted universal principles of regular Freemasonry). the usual progression is for a lodge officer to spend either one or two years in each position, advancing through "the chairs", until he elected as Worshipful Master. In addition, there are some offices that are traditionally not considered to be part of the "line", and which may be held by the same brother for many years, or be held by Past Masters

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Officers common to all Masonic jurisdictions

Worshipful Master

The senior officer of a Masonic Lodge is the Master, normally addressed and referred to as the 'Worshipful Master'. The Worshipful Master sits in the East of the lodge room, directs all of the business of his lodge, and is vested with considerable powers without further reference to the members. He also presides over ritual and ceremonies. The office of Worshipful Master is the highest honour to which a lodge may appoint any of its members. The office is filled by election, generally by means of a secret ballot. However, in most lodges the progression is such that the post will almost always be filled by the previous year's Senior Warden. It should be noted that the honorific "Worshipful" does not imply that the Master is worshiped. Rather, use of the word implies its original meaning, "to give respect", similar to calling a judge "Your Honor" or a mayor "Honorable". In fact, mayors and judges in parts of England are still called "Worshipful" or "Your Worship." French Masons use the word Venerable as the honorific for their Masters.

There are a few titles used in relation to the position of Master of a Lodge:

- Worshipful Master - the presiding officer of the Lodge
- Past Master - a member who has previously served as Worshipful Master of any Lodge.(In many jurisdictions, a Past Master is addressed as "Worshipful Brother <name>".)
- Immediate Past Master or Junior Past Master - the Past Master who served directly before the present incumbent, and acts as his mentor and prompter.
- Installed Master - generic term for all Masons who currently serve or have ever served as Worshipful Master of a Lodge

- Right Worshipful Master - alternative name for the Worshipful Master in Scotland (In some jurisdictions the title "Right Worshipful" - without the word Master - is reserved for Grand Lodge Officers)
- Deputy Master - in England and Wales a Royal Prince elected as Worshipful Master may appoint a Deputy to serve in his place
- Depute Master - in Scotland, an elected deputy to the Right Worshipful Master
- Serving or Reigning Master - colloquial term for the current Worshipful Master of a lodge
- Board of Installed Masters - an assembly restricted to masons who are Installed Masters

The corresponding grand rank is Grand Master. The Grand Master may preside over his Grand Lodge when it is in session, and also has certain rights in every lodge under his jurisdiction. Grand Masters are usually addressed as "Most Worshipful".

Senior Warden

The 'Senior Warden' (sometimes known as First Warden) is the second of the three principal officers of a lodge, and is the Master's principal deputy. Under some constitutions, if the Worshipful Master is absent the Senior Warden presides at meetings as "acting Master", and may act for the Master in all matters of lodge business. Under other constitutions, including Grand Lodge of England and Grand Lodge of Ireland, no mason may act as Worshipful Master unless they have previously been a Master, and so the Senior Warden cannot fulfil this role unless he is a Past Master. In many lodges it is presumed that the Senior Warden will become the next Worshipful Master.

Junior Warden

The third of the 'principal officers' is the 'Junior Warden' (or Second Warden). In some jurisdictions the Junior Warden has a particular responsibility for ensuring that visiting Masons are in possession of the necessary credentials. In others, this is the job of the Tyler. The Junior Warden is charged with the supervision of the Lodge while it is in recess for meals or other social purposes. The Wardens are 'regular officers' of the Lodge, meaning that the positions must be filled.

Treasurer

The role of the 'Treasurer' is to keep the accounts, collect annual dues from the members, pay bills and forward annual dues to the Grand Lodge.

The annual presentation of accounts is an important measure of the lodge's continuing viability, whilst the efficient collection of annual subscriptions is vitally important, as any lapse in payment (deliberate or unintentional) can lead to a member losing voting rights, being denied the opportunity to visit other lodges, and finally even being debarred or excluded from his own lodge.

Secretary

Although any member may hold the office of 'Secretary', it is almost universal practice for an experienced Past Master to hold this position. (One notable exception to this norm was the

appointment of Rudyard Kipling as Secretary of Lodge of Hope and Perseverance No 782 (English jurisdiction) at Lahore, Punjab, India in 1886: Kipling was just 20 years old, and had only just been admitted as a Freemason; indeed, he recorded the minutes of his own initiation)It is also common for the same member to hold the office of Secretary for a number of years, for the sake of continuity; although again, there is no rule to this effect, and annual re-election/appointment is necessary in all jurisdictions. The Secretary's office is sometimes said to be the real power base of a lodge. It is certainly true that the position is an influential one, and in those lodges which do not have an active general committee, the Secretary inevitably ends up making many key decisions in the life of the lodge. The Secretary's role includes issuing the 'summons' (a formal notice of an impending meeting, with time, date and agenda), recording meeting minutes, completing statistical returns to the Grand Lodge, and advising the Worshipful Master on matters of procedure. In many lodges it is also the Secretary who determines (with consultation) the progression of officers within the lodge. The Secretary is almost always a key figure in the interviewing of potential new members of the lodge.

Deacons

A Deacon is a junior officer in the lodge. In the traditions of most Grand Lodges each subordinate lodge has two Deacons, styled 'Senior Deacon' and 'Junior Deacon' (though 'First Deacon' and 'Second Deacon' is sometimes encountered as an alternative.)The principal roles of the Senior Deacon are to conduct candidates around the Lodge during certain ceremonies and formally to assist the Worshipful Master and to carry messages between the Master and the Senior Warden. The office of 'Junior Deacon' is similar in many respects to that of Senior Deacon. The principal roles of the Junior Deacon are to assist the Senior Warden, conduct certain candidates, and carry messages between the two Wardens. In some jurisdictions he is also responsible for guarding the inside of the main door of the lodge and ensuring that the lodge is tiled (in other jurisdictions this duty is given to the *Inner Guard* or *Inside Sentinel*).

Steward

'Stewards' are commonly appointed to fulfill a number of junior assistant roles. There is considerable variance, even within the same jurisdiction, as to the precise roles played by Stewards. Some of their common duties could include the following:

- Stewards are often tasked with an understudy role to fill the position of the Senior Deacon or Junior Deacons, in their absence.
- When a degree ceremony is performed, one or more Steward(s) may be required to assist the two Deacons is conducting the candidates around the temple.
- Stewards have a traditional role in many jurisdictions of serving wine during any meal served after the lodge meeting.

Some jurisdictions specify that each lodge has two Stewards, known as the 'Senior Steward' and 'Junior Steward'. Other jurisdictions put no limit on the number of Stewards who may be appointed, and in this respect the office is unique. The Worshipful Master may appoint any number of Stewards, according to the size and requirements of his lodge. Although newer

members usually fill the office of Steward, in some lodges it is traditional for a Past Master to be appointed to supervise the work of the Stewards.

Tyler

The 'Tyler' is sometimes known as the 'Outer Guard' of the lodge. His duty is to guard the door (from the outside), with a drawn sword, and ensure that only those who are duly qualified manage to gain entry into the lodge meeting. In some jurisdictions, he also prepares candidates for their admission. The Tyler is sometimes a Past Master of the Lodge, while in other jurisdictions; the Tyler may be an employed brother from another lodge. This perpetuates the historical condition of lodges meeting in ale houses and employing the landlord as Tyler.

Officers found in some jurisdictions and not in others

There are many officers that are found in some jurisdictions and not in others. Depending on the jurisdiction, some are "progressive" others are not. The more common ones include:

Inner Guard or Inside Sentinel

The office of 'Inner Guard' (or Inside Sentinel) is common to UK lodges, but is rare in American lodges. He is commonly assigned to a fairly junior member, and provides an opportunity for him to observe ceremonies and display his own abilities. The task of guarding the door is shared with the 'Tyler' (see above). The Inner Guard is on the inside of the door, and in some jurisdictions is armed with a poignard, or short dagger. In those jurisdictions which do not appoint an Inner Guard this duty is added to those of the Junior Deacon (see above). In Ireland, if the Inner Guard is not present for some reason, the Junior Warden will take on the role of Inner Guard, too.

Chaplain

In most Masonic jurisdictions, each lodge will have a 'Chaplain'. The principal role of the Chaplain is to lead prayer before and after the lodge meeting, and to say grace while the lodge is at dinner. In many lodges this position is filled by a clergyman (an ordained minister, priest, rabbi, imam, etc.) who is a brother of the lodge. However, it is not required that the Chaplain be a clergyman, as prayers are non-denominational. In some lodges the tradition is for the immediate Past Master to act as Chaplain.

Director of Ceremonies / Ritualist

The title 'Director of Ceremonies' is used in the United Grand Lodge of England and its subordinate lodges, as well as in many other jurisdictions. However, other titles found in other jurisdictions include, 'Lecturer', and 'Ritualistic'. Whatever the title, this officer is responsible for the smooth flowing of ceremonial and ritual and may hold rehearsals. He may be responsible for prompting other officers who forget their lines. In some jurisdictions, he directs proceedings during the installation of a new Worshipful Master. He is also responsible for

forming processions and introducing visitors, except in those jurisdictions which appoint a 'Marshal' for these latter purposes

Marshal

The office of 'Marshal' is quite common in the United States, but not in other countries. In some jurisdictions where it is found, the title is simply an alternative for 'Director of Ceremonies' (see above).

However, there are jurisdictions in which the office is distinct from any other, in which cases the duties of the office revolve around the organization of processions and ensuring the correct precedence and etiquette in formal proceedings, including the introduction of visitors to the lodge. This is distinct (in such jurisdictions) from the role of the Director of Ceremonies in supervising the ritual of the lodge's degree ceremonies.

Masters of Ceremony

The offices of 'Senior and Junior Masters of Ceremony' appear in some jurisdictions. Their primary duty is to prepare candidates prior to each of the three degrees. They also help conduct the candidates during the degree conferrals.

Almoner

The 'Almoner' (sometimes called the 'Caring Officer') is responsible for the well-being of lodge members and their families. He remains in contact with members who are unwell, and also maintains a discreet presence in the lives of widows of former members, so that the lodge may readily assist them should they find themselves in any particular need. Of necessity the Almoner must be well versed in local and national Masonic charities and the scope of their charitable work, so as to offer advice to those who might qualify for such assistance. In some jurisdictions, these duties are handled by a committee (under various titles).

Organist / Director of Music

The 'Organist' or 'Director of Music' provides musical accompaniment to lodge proceedings, although there is no set form. Many lodge rooms are equipped with a pipe organ or electronic organ, and in others, there is provision for a wider range of instruments. In other places the Director of Music operates recorded or digital music systems, such as at the Grand Lodge of Austria in Vienna.

Additional (less common) Offices

There are certain offices which exist only in particular lodges, or only in the lodges of a particular jurisdiction. As far as possible, the following list seeks to record all such offices that are either reasonably widespread, or else have been made notable by some other means, such as being held by famous people.

Orator

In some jurisdictions there is a strong tradition of Masonic research and education, and the presentation of papers by members is as common as degree ceremonies or other business. In such cases the 'Orator' may present papers, or be responsible for their presentation by others. The Orator may also be called upon to present a paper to celebrate milestones in the life of the lodge.

The term Grand Orator refers to a similar office within Grand Lodges.

Historian

Most lodges have a senior member who holds a particular interest in the lodge's history. In some jurisdictions, this interest may lead to appointment to formal office as the lodge's 'Historian'. The office involves the archiving of documents and artifacts, and the publishing and updating of historical information.

Charity Steward

All lodges are charged with maintaining an appropriate level of charitable giving to good causes. In some jurisdictions the office of 'Charity Steward' exists. He is responsible for encouraging the members to give generously, as well as leading discussions about the appropriate recipients of the lodge's charitable donations.

Poet Laureate

This particular office is believed to be unique to one Scottish lodge, the 'Lodge Canongate Kilwinning' No 2. In 1787 the lodge appointed Robert Burns as 'Poet Laureate'^[2], an investiture later immortalized in a painting by Stewart Watson, the original of which hangs in the Grand Lodge of Scotland building in Edinburgh. The painting incorporates a certain amount of artistic license, which may possibly extend to the presence of Burns himself, for although he was certainly a member of the Lodge, it is not clear that he was present at the meeting at which he was appointed Poet Laureate. Many years later (in 1905), the office of Poet Laureate in this lodge was awarded to Rudyard Kipling, who was made an honorary member for that purpose.

There is no known Grand equivalent to this office in any other jurisdiction.

Offices generally found only at Grand Lodge level

The offices in a Grand Lodge are generally derived from the corresponding offices in its subordinate lodges. However, there are certain offices that must necessarily be filled in Grand Lodges, but have no private lodge equivalent. These are outlined below.

Deputy Grand Master

In some jurisdictions, the Deputy Grand Master serves as the Grand Master's assistant. He is followed in seniority by the Senior Grand Warden.

Grand Chancellor

The Grand Chancellor is responsible for external relations and formal interaction with the Grand Lodges of other jurisdictions. The United Grand Lodge of England changed its constitution in 2007 to allow for the appointment of a Grand Chancellor for the first time. Only a few jurisdictions have Grand Chancellors. In most jurisdictions, the **Grand Secretary** fulfills these duties. The Royal Somerset House and Inverness Lodge No 4, in England, is a rare example of a *lodge* that appoints a Chancellor as one of its officers. It appears that when the office was created in the nineteenth century it was intended to be similar to the role of Chaplain. However when revived in the early twentieth century, the role was more directed towards external relations. By the late twentieth century it appears that it had become customary for the office to be awarded to the longest serving member of the Lodge.

Grand Registrar

In some jurisdictions a 'Grand Registrar' is appointed to be the principal legal officer of a Grand Lodge. The role is generally held by a qualified lawyer or judge. In other jurisdictions, there is no official title given to the holders of these duties.

Grand Superintendent of Works

When this office exists, the 'Grand Superintendent of Works' is a Grand Lodge officer responsible for the Grand Lodge building, and as such, the office is usually awarded to a qualified architect or builder. Responsibility for individual Lodge buildings usually falls to a committee.

Grand Sword Bearer

Many Grand Masters are preceded in formal processions by a ceremonial sword. In such cases a 'Grand Sword Bearer' is appointed to carry the sword.

Grand Standard Bearer or Grand Banner Bearer

Many Grand Masters or Grand Lodges have an official standard which is carried behind the Grand Master in formal processions. In such cases a 'Grand Standard Bearer' or 'Grand Banner Bearer' is appointed.

Grand Pursuivant

It is the Grand Pursuivant duty to announce all applicants for admission into the Grand Lodge by their names and Masonic titles; to take charge of the jewels and regalia of the Grand Lodge; to attend all communications of the Grand Lodge, and to perform such other duties as may be required by the Grand Master or presiding officer.