



DGGL NEWS

Volume 1, Issue 2

Education Committee Publication

October 2006

The Apron - Distinguishing Badge of a Mason

Why do we wear an apron, and what is its significance? Our Order is founded on Operative Masonry, and operative Masons in common with most other artisans, wear aprons for the protection of their clothing. Different trades used different types of aprons, each suitable for the purpose.

Originally the Entered Apprentice wore an apron with a bib secured with a tape around his neck. The bib was to protect the upper part of his clothing when clasp a heavy stone, such as a pillar, with both arms. Later, as he became proficient in his trade, he became an artisan and his job was then to smooth and prepare the stone for its place in the building. He then had no use for the upper portion of the apron, so he let it hang down over the lower part--thus we have our own badge with a triangular piece overlapping the square portion. There are several explanations of this triangular portion of the apron all or any of which may be correct, but the following seems the most logical of them.

The significance of the apron is "servitude." Certain dignitaries of the Anglican Church wear an apron as part of their clerical dress. Thus a person signifies the service that is expected of a Freemason to his neighbour. When investing the Entered Apprentice with the badge he is informed that it is more ancient than the Golden Fleece and more honourable than the Star and Garter.



The Golden Fleece

According to Greek legend, King Pelias of Thessaly had ousted his brother Aeson and to rid himself of Aeson's son, Jason he persuaded the lad to fetch the Golden Fleece which hung on an oak tree at Ares in Colchis. It was guarded by a dragon. The adventures of Jason and his fifty

companions, who sailed with him make one of the finest stories of Greek literature. (The fleece came from the mythical ram on which Phrixus and Helle escaped from death and was hung in the Grove at Ares by Phrixus, who alone survived the flight from his native land.)

The Order of the Golden Fleece was founded by Philip the Good, duke of Burgundy, in January, 1429, on occasion of his marriage to Isabella, daughter of King John I, of Portugal. The order was instituted for the protection of the Catholic Church. The fleece was chosen as the emblem because wool was the predominate product of the lower European countries in which the order flourished. The number of knights of the order was twenty-four. In 1433 the number was raised to thirty-three, all gentlemen by birth. In 1477, on the marriage of Mary of Burgundy with Duke Maximilian, the grand mastership of the order passed to the House of Hapsburg. The last chapter of the original Order was held by Philip II of Spain in the cathedral of Ghent. Up to that time the knights had filled the vacancies by their own votes, but Philip II obtained permission of Pope Gregory XIII to nominate the knights himself.

After the Spanish Netherlands were ceded to Austria in 1713-14, the Austrians claimed the office. The resulting dispute split the order into two parts—one in Austria and one in Spain. The jewel of the order (which differs slightly in the two countries) is a golden ram hanging from a ring which is passed around its middle. This is suspended from a scroll in very elaborate design with the

motto, (in Latin) 'The reward of labour is not trifling'. The jewel, in turn, is attached to a golden collar made up of links. Each link is in the form of a capital "B" with rays issuing from it. The collar is usually worn with full dress. On ordinary occasions a broad red ribbon collar is worn in its place.

Since its inception this order has been considered as the most important and highest of all civil orders on the European continent. The order has no standing in England; hence we hear little of it. No British subject is permitted to accept this, or any other foreign order, without special permission from the sovereign. At the time of the dispute over the order between Austria and Spain in 1714, speculative Masonry was gaining a firm footing and its ritual was then revised and prominence given to the Golden Fleece.

The Roman Eagle

The Roman Eagle also has an interesting history. The eagle was highly esteemed among the Romans. It was usually depicted with outstretched wings, sometimes of gold and silver, but most frequently of bronze. It was carried at the head of a staff in the same manner as a banner. The eagle borne upon a spear appears to have been used first by the Persians. The Romans took the idea from them, and used it as an emblem of honour, to be carried before the chief ruler. In 1804, Napoleon had metal eagles carried before his army. Austria and Russia both had double eagles as a symbol of their empires. The symbol of the United States of America is the bald eagle.

This Month's Law:

Law 131: Brethren of other Lodges who are distinguished for their zeal in Freemasonry may be admitted Honorary Members of a Lodge on being duly proposed by the Master and accepted at a Regular Meeting. Honorary Members shall be entitled to all the privileges of members in good standing, except those restricted by these Laws to Qualified Members.

Subject to the approval hereinafter specified a lodge may confer upon any of its own members "Distinguished Service Membership". This honour shall be conferred only upon a Brother who has given long and distinguished service to the Lodge. Such a brother remains a Qualified Member but may, if so resolved by the Lodge, be exempt from further annual contribution. Before any proposal is made to the Lodge, each recommendation for this honour shall be submitted to the appropriate Provincial or District Grand Master, Grand Superintendent, or the Chairman of the Metropolitan District Committee or, in the case of Lodges under the direct supervision of Grand Lodge, the Grand Master Mason. Such approval having been obtained, the Brother must be proposed in Open Lodge by the Master, and due notice given that the proposal will come before the subsequent Regular Meeting, when it must be approved by not less than two-thirds of the Qualified Members who vote.

Comment from District Grand Lodge:

It is an accepted fact throughout Scottish Freemasonry that "long and distinguished service" equates to a minimum of 15 years unbroken, active service as a Master Mason. Grand Lodge would also discourage Lodges from exempting a candidate for Distinguished Service Membership from further annual dues, as this practise has in some instances caused Lodges to suffer financial difficulties. It is essential that the District Grand Lodge is contacted prior to any open discussion being made regarding the wish to confer this honour, as it may avoid undue embarrassment should the candidate not meet the necessary requirements.

In 1701, Frederick I of Prussia founded the Order of the Black Eagle. The number of knights was limited to thirty, exclusive of the princes of royal blood. The revisers of our rituals probably selected the reference to the Roman Eagle as it was the highest emblem of dignity, honour and power of that famous empire.

Order of the Garter

The Order of the Garter is, of course, something we know more about, being a British Order. It is the highest order of knighthood in Great Britain, and is considered the most honourable and exclusive in the world. Its full title is "The Most Noble Order of the Garter." According to tradition, King Edward III, who was dancing with the Countess of Salisbury at a ball held on January 18, 1343, picked up a blue garter that had dropped from her leg and tied it around his own. Observing the queen's uneasy glances, and the consternation of the countess, he returned it to its owner with the remark, Evil be to him who evil thinks.

At this time the king had been successful in the French campaign and was contemplating a second expedition. He resolved to institute an order of knighthood in honour of his success, as well as a means of rewarding his army favourites. He placed the order under the protection of St. George. For 179 years it remained practically as instituted by Edward III but in 1522, Henry VIII revised the statutes. The colour of the emblem was blue, which at that time was the French national colour. The motto translated, Let him be dishonoured who thinks ill of it, was appropriate whether applied to the French expedition or to the order itself.

Formerly, the knights were elected by the members, but since the reign of George III all appointments have been made by the reigning sovereign. Originally it was called the Order of Saint George. It now consists of the sovereign, who is the grand master, the Prince of Wales and twenty-five knights companions. In addition it is open to all English princes (lineal descendants of George I) and foreign sovereigns as may be chosen by the king or queen. On occasions, other companions are admitted for special reasons so that the whole order usually numbers about fifty.

The insignia consists of the garter, the collar, and the great George; the star, the ribbon and badge, or lesser George. The garter is of blue velvet ribbon--the particular tint being known as "garter blue." The ribbon is edged with gold and fastened by a gold buckle on the left leg below the knee. It bears the motto of the order in letters of gold, or sometimes in diamonds. When the sovereign is a woman, it is worn on the left arm above the elbow.

The collar consists of twenty-five pieces alternately gold love knots and buckled garters enamelled in blue, enclosing roses. From the centre link of the collar hangs the badge of the great George. It is a figure of St. George as a knight in gold enamel and set with jewels. He is depicted on horseback, overthrowing the dragon with a spear.

A star was added by Charles I in 1692. It consists of eight silver rays encrusted with diamonds, issuing from a buckled garter bearing the motto and enclosing a white field of enamel with the red cross of St. George upon it. When the collar and great George are not worn, the "lesser George" as it is called, is used. It is similar to the great George but much smaller and hangs from a broad blue ribbon which passes slantwise over the left shoulder. The robes of the order are of equal magnificence.

The order became prominent in the 17th century after Charles I added the star to the insignia. On ordinary occasions the star is worn on the breast and the garter below the knee. Full regalia is only worn when grand chapter meets, or at a ceremony such as a coronation. The order meets at Windsor Castle. So, Brethren, we have our badge of white for purity--of lamb's skin for innocence; more ancient than the Golden Fleece, which was founded in 1429, and the Roman Eagle, which was instituted in 1701; and more honourable than the Garter, which is the highest order of knighthood in the world. I repeat the charge given by the Senior Warden when investing the badge — **Never disgrace that badge, for it will never disgrace you.**

October Installations:

Balmoral 1586 – Thursday 5 th
Florida 1092 – Monday 16 th
Randfontein 979 – Thursday 5 th
The Pilgrim 738 – Saturday 21 st
North Western-Bedford 1596 – Wednesday 11 th
Thaba 'Nchu 1032 – Saturday 21 st
Northern Province 1576 – Friday 13 th
Glen Douglas 1502 – Thursday 26 th
Oranje 1603 – Saturday 14 th
Century Lodge of Research 1745 – Tuesday 31 st

THE LAMBSKIN APRON - Fay Hempstead

Light and white are its leathern folds;
And a priceless lesson its texture holds.
Symbol it is, as the years increase,
Of the paths that lead through the fields of Peace.
Type it is of the higher sphere,
Where the deeds of the body, ended here,
Shall one by one the by way be,
To pass the gates of Eternity.

Emblem it is of a life intense,
Held aloof from the world of sense
Of the upright walk, and the lofty mind,
Far from the dross of earth inclined.
Sign it is that he who wears Its sweep unsullied, about him bears
That which should be to mind and heart,
A set reminder of his art.

So may it ever bring to thee
The high resolves of purity.
Its spotless field of shining white
Serve to guide thy steps aright:
Thy daily life, in scope and plan,
Be that of the strong and upright man.
And signal shall the honour be
Unto those who wear it worthily.

Receive it thus to symbolize
Its drift, in the life that before thee lies.
Badge as it is of a great degree,
Be it chart and compass unto thee.

The Badge of a Mason.

"The thick-tanned hide, girt around him with thongs, wherein the Builder builds, and at evening sticks his trowel" was so conspicuous a portion of the costume of the operative mason that it became associated with him in the public mind, and this gradually evolved into his badge; for a badge is some mark voluntarily assumed as the result of established custom whereby one's work, or station, or school of opinion, may be signified.

Of what is the mason's badge a mark? Surely its history permits but one answer to this — it is the mark of honourable and conscientious labour, the labour that is devoted to creating, to constructing rather than to destroying or demolishing. As such, the Mason's Apron is itself a symbol of profound change in the attitude of society toward work, for the labour of hand and brain, once despised by the great of the earth, is rapidly becoming the one badge of an honourable life. If men were once proud to wear a sword, while leaving the tasks of life to slaves and menials, if they once sought titles and coats of arms as emblems of distinction, they are now, figuratively speaking, eager to wear the Apron, for the Knight of the present day would rather save life than take it, and prefers, a thousand times over, the glory of achievement to the glory of title or name. Truly, "the rank has become the guinea's stamp, and a man's a man for a' that," especially if he be a man that can DO; and the real modern king, as Carlyle was always contending, is "the man who can."

If this is the message of the Apron, none has a better right to wear it than a Mason, if he be a real member of the Craft, for his is a Knight of labour if ever there was one. Not all labour deals with things. There is a labour of the mind, and of the spirit, more arduous, often, and more difficult, than any labour of the hands. He who dedicates himself to the cleaning of the Aegean stables of the world, to the clearing away of the rubbish that litters the paths of life, to the fashioning of building stones in the confused quarries of mankind, is entitled, more than any man, to wear the badge of toil!

Masonic Etiquette:

Reading: The reading of ritual, when a Lodge is at Labour, is one of the worst breaches of etiquette and probably the most common. This practise is especially disrespectful during the conferring of any of the degrees upon a candidate, who has paid for the privilege of joining our Order and deserves the best we can offer.

As an office-bearer, there is absolutely no excuse as by the natural progression, we are aware of our next office and the duties attached thereto, for at least a year.

And, to the Brethren presenting the floor workings, they have made the effort and are entitled to your full attention. You would also learn much more from observation than from reading.

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