



# Notes from a Preceptor's Handbook

## A Preceptor:

(OED) 1440 A.D. from Latin *praeceptor*

A Regular Guy .....



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## Notes from a Preceptor's Handbook No 13

### 'a regular guy...?'

We use the word 'regular' with a variety of meanings. *Regular soldier, regular bus service, 'regular' guy* come to mind as typical examples. It is normally good advice therefore when first learning our ritual to ponder over quite what the word in question might have meant in the C18 when our Degrees were written in their present form. During those years however the word *regular* possessed a legal and very precise meaning

*'Regularly assembled and properly dedicated'* says one; *'Regularly held, assembled and properly dedicated'* cautions a second; *'Duly constituted, regularly assembled, and properly dedicated'* proclaims another... ..and we are of course talking about key phrases from Obligations to which we have all at sometime assented. However when rendering each of these as a solemn Obligation did we really understand quite what we repeating and why it was necessary to confirm it? (Indeed did the Worshipful Master himself *really* know?)

We are rather good in Freemasonry at using important sounding words and phrases without disclosing their inner meaning or significance in any source readily accessible to the newer Mason. It is suggested that *'Duly Constituted, Regularly Assembled and Properly Dedicated* are three such phrases. Let us take them one by one.

#### 'Duly Constituted'

Our Book of Constitutions (Rule 97) requires that every new Lodge shall be solemnly constituted according to ancient usage by the Grand Master or a suitable deputy – customarily our Provincial Grand Master or his representative. On 18<sup>th</sup> July 1945 the Consecrating Officer concluded our Stonehenge Consecration ceremony with the words: *'I constitute and form you, my good Brethren, into a Lodge of Antient, Free and Accepted Masons under the name of the Stonehenge Lodge No 6114...'*

From that moment on we became a duly constituted lodge entitled to hold funds, Initiate new members and undertake appropriate Degree ceremonies all as laid down within the Book of Constitutions.

#### 'Regularly Assembled'

A lodge is made 'Regular' by the seal of Grand Lodge on its Warrant – which must always be displayed during a normal ceremony. A lodge is 'Regularly Assembled' when it meets both at a date and place prescribed in its By-laws and, importantly, also possesses a quorum.

The Book of Constitutions shies away from defining the number in a quorum but the 'Points of Procedure' issued by the Board of General Purposes of Grand Lodge sets out to help. It states:

1 **Five** – excluding the Tyler and the Candidate – for a Degree ceremony. Two must be members of that Lodge and at least one must be an Installed Master. (B. of C. Rule 119 is helpful here).

2. **Three** – excluding the Tyler and the Master Elect - for a Board of Installed Masters.

So there we have it. After the Initiation ceremony Proposers and Seconders alike can welcome the Candidate with the assurance that all was above board and his admission to the degree in question was perfectly valid...and, after a long evening, they are perhaps feeling just a little thirsty...

## **'Properly Dedicated'**

*Returning to our Consecration Ceremony Stonehenge Lodge was dedicated:*

*'To God and His service...and also to the memory of the Royal Solomon'*

*Our Candidate as a newly made Brother and Lodge member is thereby also dedicated to the service of God – and to living according to the moral values set out within the relevant V.S.L.*

The thoughts arising from the Dedication deserve some further reflection by us all. While of the deepest significance to each Mason during his Obligation, they remain a commitment both to the Candidate and to his new Brethren expressed by their continuing encouragement and support.

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