



Notes from a Preceptor's Handbook

A Preceptor:

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

one who instructs, a teacher, a tutor, a mentor

HONORARY
MEMBER

'Honorary Members'

How often does chat over a glass of a (medicinal) Malt tum to wondering how old Bill (or Bert or Brian...) is now. 'It seems years since we have seen him. He was such a loyal member.' Masons are almost by definition warm hearted and as the Malt does its work we ask ourselves why don't we make him an Honorary Member? Momentum gathers and in the Lodge Committee none can possibly speak against. What a wonderful gesture. Or is it...?

Rule 167 of the Book of Constitutions sets out the ground rules and is both comprehensive and clear. What might be the **advantages**? Let us list them.

1. It is a public gesture of respect and affection by the Brethren of the Lodge for the Mason so honoured.
2. He is relieved of all future fees paid to the Lodge and, it follows, the Lodge is in turn relieved of any dues owing to Province and Grand Lodge.
3. He remains a member of the Lodge and is entitled to receive the Agenda and any circulated Minutes.

This seems convincing. Are there any **disadvantages**? Indeed there are - and some in fact are substantial.

Much will depend on whether or not the Honorary Member subscribes to another Craft lodge. Rule 127 imposes a serious disability on any Honorary Member who is not also a subscribing member elsewhere. This Rule precludes him from visiting another named Lodge more than once – not just once per year but throughout his lifetime! This is sobering. [This does not apply of course to his own Lodge or Lodge of instruction]

He may not take formal office in his Lodge – except, interestingly, as an *elected* Tyler. (Rule 104 (b)). He may be invited – from time to time - to stand in for an absent Officer.

He may not vote in his Lodge and, just like a Visitor, he should refrain from offering an opinion especially on any financially related matter - to which of course he does not contribute.

It follows that, as an 'elder statesman', his advice in his Lodge Committee would assuredly be welcome but he should be cautious about initiating discussion if there are possible financial overtones.

He should never invite a personal guest unless given express permission by the Master.

All these caveats may seem cruel and unfair towards a man whom the Lodge wishes to see honoured. The rationale of United Grand Lodge is simple. No one should enjoy the privileges of Freemasonry (other than within the Lodge that honoured him) unless he is actually contributing financially toward the good of the whole. Phrased in less formal language: *'No one is entitled to a free ride'*.

Still want to propose Bill or Bert or Brian? Think long and hard. Take into account his health, his pattern of Lodge activity and his other Craft interests. Honorary Membership can be a supreme reward - but it may also become a heavy cross to bear.