

Sunday Masonic Paper No. 723
The Origin and Duties of the Inner Guard
By WBro Peter J. Smith United Masters Lodge No. 167 (NZ), Sept. 1988

There is very little written about the Inner Guard when compared to other officers in the Lodge. One reason that could be considered is that, masonically speaking, the office of Inner Guard is of comparatively recent origin - 1816 being the first recorded mention of that office. For nearly a hundred years preceding this date the visitors would have been admitted and the candidates received in due form by the youngest entered apprentice or a brother appointed by the Junior Warden. It is interesting to note that the rank of Inner Guard is unknown in most American Lodges, where the Junior Deacon, under the command of the Junior Warden admits the visitors and receives the candidate. The office of Inner Guard is recognised in the English, Scottish and Irish lodges as well as most lodges overseas whose Masonic traditions are descended from these constitutions.

The Word GUARD :

The name guard or guardian is evolved from the same origin as the word Warden. In Bernard E. Jones book "Freemason's Guide and Compendium" we are informed that the word Wardian and Guardian were one and the same, and a scholar noted in 1605 that the French, Italians and others whose language comes from the Latin turned the "W" of such words as wardian into a single "U".

I quote further from Bernard E. Jones book "because their alphabet hath no acquaintance with the W at all, but then to mend the matter - they use before the U to put a G, and so of warden or wardian doe make guardian, of ward, guard-. Hence it arise that we call him that waiteth at the Towre, 'one of the guard or 'Guard'." Thus it was explained that the Wardian, Warden and Guardian are all one, 'a keeper or attender to the safety of that which he hath in charge'. The Inner Guard, then is in effect the Door Warden, and in some early lodges, he was at first a serving Brother under the control of the Outer Guard or Tyler, who was also a serving Brother.

The first recorded instance in an English lodge where the use was made of a "Door Keeper" was in 1734 at the Old Kings Arms Lodge No. 28, where more than likely he was the youngest Entered Apprentice, and he would use a Trowel as his weapon. It was about the beginning of the 19th, century when the "Door Keeper" or "Inner Tyler" began to be called the Guarder or Guard and it was not until about 1814 when there was official recognition of the actual office of Inner Guard.

The Tyler's Assistant

There are a number of old minutes where it is recorded that the Inner Guard or Inner Tyler was in fact regarded as an assistant to the Tyler, and as a serving Brother he was, like the Tyler, entitled to receive an allowance for his duties. In the minutes of the Lodge of Honour and Friendship, Blandford, (ceased 1838) it is recorded a Brother

was made an “allowance of one shilling for each lodge night and one shilling for every newly initiated Brother to take on himself the office of Inner Guard and to assist the Tyler - as he had been admitted under a dispensation of the Provincial Grand Master and was initiated without a fee”.

The Royal Augustus Lodge of Monmouth (erased 1830), it is recorded, had the office of an Outer Tyler, and a Junior Tyler. The office of Inner Guard is recorded in the 1816 records of the Lodge Love and Honour, No. 75 Falmouth. The United Grand Lodge of England authorised the Inner Guard’s Jewel - The Crossed Swords - in 1819. In researching for this paper, one discovers that the weapon with which the Inner Guard as traditionally armed was in fact the pointed trowel and it would appear there is ample evidence to support a valid argument that the Inner Guard should continue to be so equipped today, particularly as the sword has traditionally been the weapon of the Outer Guard or Tyler. It would appear to be a rather strange decision that the United Grand Lodge of England made nearly 170 years ago when it seemed it broke away from the tradition when the crossed swords were adopted in the place of the Trowel for the Inner Guard.

The Trowel -The Inner Guard’s Traditional Weapon

It would appear strange that in spite of standing tradition, our Craft appears to have overlooked the trowel in it’s ceremonial workings. Bernard E Jones suggests that the operative mason of old was largely a cutter and shaper of stone, whereas the trowel is a stone layers tool. There is no doubt at all that in the eighteenth century the use of the trowel was much more in evidence than it is now.

In 1754 a Lodge Carmathen has recorded the purchase of five trowels and the mending of twelve others, which seems to suggest that in the old lodge, trowels had a considerable part to play, but what part masonically we do not know. In the present day the trowel is used for the purpose of laying a foundation stone with masonic ceremonial where it is appropriate, as the as the only surviving link with operative masonry. The trowels used for this purpose are usually of silver, highly decorated and preserved as a memento for posterity, and are often to be found in a masonic museum. The trowel is still in use to this day in a few old English lodges, particularly in the cities of Bristol and Bath, where it has a place in the First and Third Degrees . Particularly in the Third Degree we are informed “the trowel is used for the noble and glorious purpose of spreading the cement of Brotherhood and affection which unites us in a sacred bond as a Society of Brethren, amongst whom no contention should ever exist”.

In the ritual of the First Degree, in the charge after initiation we hear “In every age monarchs themselves have been promoters of the art ; have not thought it derogatory to their dignity to exchange the Sceptre for the trowel,” This statement may be interpreted as referring to the ancient practice of arming the most recent Initiate, or junior Entered Apprentice, with a trowel as a means of keeping off all cowans and intruders.

The Grand Lodge of Ireland, in 1769, decreed “that the design for lodge seals shall consist of a Hand and a Trowel. An Irish masonic crest of 1738 showing a hand holding a pointed trowel as a stabbing weapon, provides a key to the use to which the tool was put in the early speculative lodges and possibly in the old Operative lodges which preceded them; it was the Tyler’s or the inner Doorkeeper’s weapon.

In Some Irish lodges a flat of the trowel is extended to the Candidate to receive his gift when inviting him (in the Second degree) to give to the cause of masonic charity. The hand and the trowel are found on some of the earliest known jewels used by the ‘Modern’ Lodges.

There are some lodges in England where the trowel is used as the weapon of the Inner Guard or Tyler. In the Royal Sussex Lodge, now extinct, a silver trowel was presented to the Inner Guard or Tyler. In the Lodge of Love and Honour No. 75, in Falmouth it is recorded in 1808 “that there should be two Tylers, Williamson to act on the door inside and Symons outside, Williamson should wear his badge of office, consisting of a Trowel”. That trowel is still worn by the Inner Guard of that lodge today.

There are some lodges in New Zealand where, reputedly, the trowel is a working tool of the Third Degree, and there are some lodges where it is also the Jewel of the Junior Deacon. The trowel has also been described as the implement of the Inner Guard, with which he is enabled to seal up the door of the Lodge Room, when all qualified brethren seeking admission have been admitted.

Sunday Masonic Paper moderator note:

In my mother Grand Lodge, the Grand Lodge of Nova Scotia, the working tools in the Master Mason Degree are “All the tools of Masonry, and the Trowel...” And the ritual goes on from there. Just thought I would share that as a side note, but find it interesting that the Trowel would be the instrument or weapon of the Inner Guard.

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