

## Director of Ceremonies

### Guidance Notes - The Festive Board

The buzz of the Brethren can still be heard as they make their way from the Lodge Room to the Dining Room. All are happy, you have just been part of a great meeting and as you look back into the Lodge contemplating the need for the furniture to be packed away you should be pleased with the part you have played in the evening so far. Your planning and efforts have helped ensure that success.

At this point you may contemplate relaxing a little and having a well earned drink and looking forward to an enjoyable meal.

Whilst you should take a moment to draw breathe the next part of the evening needs you more than ever so as to ensure that all runs smoothly and well and that all are to get away at a sensible time. General convention is that the evening should be concluded by 10pm so think about what you want to happen and when so you might stay on track, e.g. first course over by 8.15pm and initial wine takings undertaken, coffee served by 9.00pm, toasts commenced by 9.15pm etc.

#### **Before the Meeting**

You will have ensured that you have an **up to date Toast List**. Though I know that you will be offered one by the Lodge Secretary or the acting Provincial DC, if attending, there will be a time when they have forgotten to bring one so do not rely upon them.

Up to date Toast Lists are always available on the Provincial Website by clicking on the logo's on the DC's page.

#### **On arrival at the Meeting**

Check with the Secretary that a table plan has been set and that all are to be seated in their correct positions. On nights of Installation the acting Provincial Director of Ceremonies will be there and will be able to give help and guidance but on other occasions the Provincial Grand Master, his Deputy or Assistant may be in attendance; therefore it is important to understand appropriate protocols.

From the right of the Worshipful Master the sequence of seats should be the Candidate (if there is one), the Provincial Grand Master, the Deputy Provincial Grand Master, the Assistant Provincial Grand Master together with the Grand Officers (in order of seniority). If there is inadequate space on the top table to the right of the Worshipful Master then remaining Grand Officers should be seated to the Worshipful Master's left after the Immediate Past Master and Lodge Chaplain.

#### **Immediately before the Festive Board**

Ensure that the table places have been set as per the plan, that the Toast List is available to the Worshipful Master and that there are gavels available to the Worshipful Master and the Senior and Junior Wardens.

Seek to speak with the Worshipful Master to agree wine takings. It is understood that this can be difficult to do at this point in the Meeting but think about what you see as appropriate. There are no hard and fast rules but it is suggested that the number of wine takings should be kept to a sensible and not excessive number. Suggestions might be with Principal Officers, the Lodge Secretary and Royal Ark Mariners.

Ensure that the Senior Warden knows that he is to make a toast to the Worshipful Master and make any arrangements for the Master's song. Also ensure that the Junior Warden (or other) is ready to make a toast to the Visitors. If there is to be a response to this toast then agree who is to do it at this point.

This may be an appropriate moment to remind the Wardens that if they leave their seats they should be occupied by another Brother, except during the singing of the Master's Song (see later).

If the Provincial Grand Master is present and is to reply to his Toast, make sure there is someone to 'propose' it and not just read it as the Toast list. Ask the Brother not to be on his feet too long, keep to the point and not to tell 'jokes per se'. The same will apply if the Deputy/Assistant is to reply to the Officers of Provincial Grand Lodge.

Try to see that there is not too great a time gap between Lodge Meeting and Dinner and liaise with the Catering Staff to ensure that all is ready. Then form a short column of the Worshipful Master, the Candidate, and/or the Provincial Grand Master, and/or the Deputy Provincial Grand Master, and/or the Assistant Provincial Grand Master.

When all is ready say *'Brethren please take your places'*.

When they are all in place, stand by the door and say *'Brethren please receive the Worshipful Master, accompanied by the Candidate (if appropriate), the Provincial Grand Master and/or Deputy Provincial Grand Master and/or Assistant Provincial Grand Master'*. Lead off in front of the Worshipful Master and always go in a **clockwise** direction. When they are in place, remind the Worshipful Master to gavel and to call upon the Chaplain to give Grace. Assist the Worshipful Master and if possible the Provincial Grand Master and/or Deputy Provincial Grand Master and/or Assistant Provincial Grand Master to be seated.

Take your own seat and enjoy the first course but stay alert.

## **WINE TAKING**

On occasions when a Provincial DC is in attendance he will manage the initial wine takings but when not then when those on the Top Table have finished their first course it is time to undertake the first three/five/seven wine takings.

So as to gain the attention of the Brethren it is appropriate that the Worshipful Master and Wardens should 'bang' their Gavels. The Worshipful Master's gavel is effectively his property so if you are to use it show courtesy by asking him if you may do so. If your using it would mean stretching uncomfortably across the Worshipful Master or others then ask that the Worshipful Master to use it himself. Wait for the Lodge Wardens to gavel **and stand** and say:-

*'Brother Principal Officers and Brethren the Worshipful Master will be pleased to take Wine with the Provincial Grand Master.'*

Note that you are effectively speaking on behalf of the Worshipful Master so there is no need to preface these words with 'Worshipful Master'.

They will both stand and take wine together.

Gavel and say:-

*'Brother Principal Officers and Brethren the Worshipful Master will be pleased to take Wine with you all and requests you remain seated.'*

Gavel and say:-

*'Brother Principal Officers and Brethren the Provincial Grand Master will be pleased to take Wine with you all and he too requests you remain seated.'*

Repeat this procedure with the Deputy and Assistant Provincial Grand Masters.

Further wine takings may then be taken and usually in a series of two or three. On each occasion the gavels are banged, the Wardens rise and remain standing and the words to be used are:-

*'Brother Principal Officers and Brethren the Worshipful Master will be pleased to take Wine with'*

During wine takings, the Lodge Wardens should stand when they have gaveled, but should resume their seats when the nature of the wine taking has been announced.

## **TOASTS**

The meal is over and coffee has been served, it may still be being drunk. It is now time for the final part of the evening.

Grace always follows the meal and before any toasts. At this point you should request the Worshipful Master to gavel and call upon the Chaplain. The Brethren should sit.

Now see latest Toast List which you will have brought with you and a copy is now with the Worshipful Master.

The National Anthem is always sung **before** the Loyal Toast unless it has previously been sung in the Lodge Room.

There is no fire after the Loyal Toast.

The other toasts then follow, the first being prefaced by the words:-

*'Brother Principal Officers and Brethren I claim your attention to the Worshipful Master who will propose the first toast'.*

The following toasts are then prefaced by the words:-

*'Brother Principal Officers and Brethren I claim your attention to the Worshipful Master who will propose the next toast'.* You should not use the words 'will propose the second, third toast etc. as occasionally any of the numbered toasts may not be used.

During toasts the Wardens stand when they have gaveled and remain standing until everyone resumes their seats.

During responses to toasts they stand having gaveled but then resume their seats following the announcement of the response.

After the toast to the Provincial Grand Master and/or Deputy Provincial Grand Master and/or Assistant Provincial Grand Master, gavel and say "*Brethren I claim your attention to the Provincial Grand Master or Deputy Provincial Grand Master or Assistant Provincial Grand Master*", stand behind him all through his response.

After the toast to the Worshipful Master, when/if the Lodge Wardens proceed to the top table during the singing of his song it is **not** necessary for anyone to occupy their chairs.

Some Lodges have a toast to Absent Brethren and others just remember Absent Brethren. If it is the custom of the Lodge there is no reason why the toast should not be fired but if it is, then it should never be given until after the second Toast. If there is a need to drink to Absent Brethren before Toast number two then it cannot be called a Toast and cannot be fired. It is preferable to get the first three Toasts out of the way before Absent Brethren whatever the time.

The Reply to a Toast should never be split up from the Proposal.

**Well done, the evening is now complete and you may make your way home feeling pleased to have completed a job well done.**