

## THE CONDUCT OF MASONIC BUSINESS WHEN NON-MASONS ARE PRESENT

*With the consent and encouragement of Masonic authority non-masons (which phrase includes ladies) are increasingly being invited to Masonic gatherings. Following enquiries from the Craft, the Board of General Purposes has thought it timely to issue guidance on the circumstances when non-masons may be present at Masonic events.*

1. Non-masons may not be present at the opening or closing of a Lodge or at any time that a Lodge is open.
2. The ceremonies of Initiation, Passing, Raising and Installation can only take place validly in an open Lodge. The same validity extends to individual elements of ceremony such as the Charge after Initiation, and the Masonic Lectures associated with the ceremonies.
3. No Masonic signs or secrets may be shown or imparted outside a regularly open Lodge. Other brief portions of Masonic text may be employed when illustrating Masonic ideals to a non-Masonic audience, but elements of the ceremonies should not be recited at length.
4. The administrative business of the Lodge can only be conducted in open Lodge.
5. There is however no compelling need to adopt a mysterious or secretive attitude towards other Masonic activities, such as the laying of a foundation stone, which take place without a Lodge being open or after a Lodge has been called off or closed. The distinction here being that the event is *ceremonial* rather than *ritual*.
6. Before the planning of any such public event, the Province must be consulted.
7. Rule 178 prohibits the wearing of regalia when persons other than Masons are present unless a Dispensation has previously been given. It is highly likely that such permission will be granted for the purposes of open days, church services and other appropriate events. But Dispensation from the Province must be sought in accordance with the Rule. This includes 'Ladies and Gentlemen to Dine' if regalia is to be worn during a visit to the Lodge Room.
8. It is perfectly in order for non-masons to be invited to Masonic after-proceedings and an abridged Masonic Toast List may be employed though no reference to Masonic Ritual (such as in *fire*) must be made and if the Tyler's Toast is to be used it should be in its short form. The abridged Toast List should undoubtedly include The Queen and The Grand Master and the Worshipful Master. Instead of a Toast to the Guests, when a reply might be difficult or embarrassing for a stranger, it is suggested that the Worshipful Master 'take wine' with the guests. On such occasions, care should be taken not to embarrass or puzzle visitors unused to Masonic practice. [Note: there are particular problems in this regard for the small number of Lodges which remain open, or 'called-off' at the Festive Board, and are closed at the end of Dinner. The Province should be consulted in such cases, if non-Masons are to be invited to be present.]

*If the Provincial Office can be of further assistance to Lodges in these matters, please feel free to contact us by e-mail.*