
How to wear the masonic apron

This jurisdiction has never enshrined in its Constitutions any rule and regulation as to the proper way to wear the masonic apron and the question of whether to wear it inside or outside the jacket has been left to the individual lodges. These articles lay out the two arguments.

Outside the jacket

By RW Bro. A E. Roberts

With such symbolism as the apron presents to a freemason, he is meant to realize the nature and significance of being clothed with such a badge; that he must never disgrace it, for it will never disgrace him. Clothed with this bond of friendship, it is quite clear that if a brother neglect such advice, he disgraces himself and not the apron. Thus the apron, like a sign on the highway, should have nothing to obstruct its view, every part being fully displayed as an ever-ready guide on the way to masonic duties.

Although the clothing of early days lent itself to the full view of the apron, the change in man's attire today cannot and should not alter the significance of the apron, nor hide any part of it from view, for as a whole it has a deep symbolic import and conveys its important and instructive lesson. As the badge of a freemason no coat or garment or part of any coat or garment should obstruct or cover it from view. Every brother when "properly clothed" in the lodge should feel so proud of this great emblem, he should see that it is in full view to all, for it is the most important article of masonic clothing.

Illustrations in the large number of masonic journals which are published today show brethren both singly and in groups wearing the apron outside the ordinary clothing. In one of these journals Bro. Elbert Bede says: "If there is a purpose in wearing the distinguished badge of a mason in the lodge

room, it should be worn in such a manner as to show not only pride of the owner as being one of those who may wear such a badge, but also that it may serve the purpose for which it is intended. Our Freemasonry may be invisible, but the apron shouldn't be."

Constitutions exist which definitely declare "The brethren shall be clothed with aprons worn on the outside of the coat."

The apron which does not protect the clothing is of little use; likewise the apron which is but partly shown, does not fittingly symbolize protection from vice. Therefore strictly speaking the apron should be worn outside the coat, not underneath it.

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Underneath the jacket

By R.W. Bro. L. Healey, D.G.M.

A question that has exercised the minds of a number of freemasons during the past few years has recently come into prominence in the international masonic world as a result of a ruling made by the Grand Lodge of Scotland last year [1951].

At a quarterly communication presided over by MW Bro. Malcolm Harvey of Kinord, KCMG, DL, the Grand Master, a law was adopted that lodge aprons "shall be fastened under the coat, and must be worn so as to be visible."

In the Grand Jurisdiction of British Columbia from the time of the formation of Grand Lodge up to recent years, it was the established practice to wear the apron under the coat, as evidenced by a varied assortment of group photographs taken during the early years, as well as the experience of those now living during later times. In fact any departure from this custom was an exceedingly rare occurrence up to the end of World War II, except in the case of brethren of the Armed Services attending lodge in uniform.

The advent of the double-breasted jacket as a later fashion in men's wear created the problem as to how to wear the apron visibly in lodge with the jacket buttoned. Some brethren solved that problem by fastening the apron outside the jacket rather than leave it open, with the result that a motley assortment of styles of apron wear could be observed in the average lodge at labour.

No doubt the Grand Lodge of Scotland gave complete consideration to all angles of the matter, perhaps consulted with the editor of the "Tailor & Cutter" as to the possibility of the double-breasted jacket being on the way out as a style for evening

wear. But there is a stronger probability that the decision was based upon a firm determination to adhere to the custom regarding the wearing of the apron which has prevailed for more than two centuries past in that Grand Lodge, as well as in its neighbouring jurisdictions in the old land. And that a change at this time to suit a passing fad in the design of men's garments was neither necessary nor desirable.

The Grand Lodge of British Columbia has derived a great many of its usages and customs from the Grand Lodge of Scotland under whose jurisdiction five of the nine lodges which formed the Grand Lodge in 1871 had their existence. This timely ruling, therefore, is of particular interest to the members of British Columbia lodges as an incentive to continue to establish usage and custom, and wear the apron as the brethren of this Grand jurisdiction have always worn it, fastened under the coat and in such a manner as to be visible.

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More about wearing the apron

As it is known, both the Irish and Scottish Constitutions follow the practice of wearing the masonic apron under the coat, whereas in England, only when full evening dress, with tails, is donned, is the girdle slipped under the garment, the cut-out pattern of the front of which permits full view of the apron.

In many cases, with our brethren of those sister constitutions, according to the shape of the coat or jacket worn, the apron is barely showing, whilst, of necessity a double-breasted garment, which would hide it completely, must be ruled out for wear. Obviously, such conditions have led to a partial relaxation of the rule, and in some of the latest amendments to the regulations of the Grand Lodge of Scotland, there has been substituted the recommendation that aprons shall be fastened preferably under the coat, but must be worn so as to be visible.

One recalls, in regard to the custom, the witty repartée made, some years ago, by the late Earl of Donoughmore, Grand Master of Ireland, at a masonic gathering in London which had witnessed a demonstration of Irish working by a visiting team. Taunted as to the illogicality of thus hiding the badge of a freemason, he suggested that, on the contrary, being presumed to be working craftsmen, it was unthinkable that anyone should work with his coat on, and the practice illustrated the fact.

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