



Nugget

Calling Off and Calling On the Wardens' Columns

Index

Calling Off and calling on; allied to the raising and lowering of the Wardens Columns.

Summary

Calling Off and calling ON; allied to the origins and usage of the Wardens Columns. It is an extract from a book by Revd. Neville Barker-Cryer, published by Lewis Masonic

Keywords

First-Degree, Calling, On, Off, Columns

Calling Off and calling ON - the Wardens' Columns

Calling Off and Calling On

Where does it come from? Well, we have to rely on the Masonic exposure of the early 1700s *'Three Distinct Knocks'* which provides the earliest information about it. This is what it says:

'The Master whispers to the Senior Deacon at his right-hand side, and says: " 'tis my will and pleasure that this Lodge is called off from work to refreshment during pleasure"; then the Deacon carries it to the Senior Warden and whispers the same words in his ear; he then whispers it in the ear of the Junior Deacon, and he carries it to the Junior Warden and whispers the same to him, who declares it with a loud voice and says: "it is our Master's Will and Pleasure, that this Lodge is called from work to refreshment during pleasure". Then he sets up his column and the Senior lays his down, for the care of the Lodge is in the hands of the Junior Warden while they are at refreshment'.

Raising and lowering of columns

There is a practical reason why the columns are used in this way. During the early years of speculative Masonry, Lodge work was done at a table and the Tyler would serve drinks to the members during the time the Lodge was open.

Toasts would be taken during a pause in the business; however, for a meal, which might be taken at the same table, the Lodge would be 'Called Off'. If the Lodge was Called Off, the Brethren remained in their seats. A signal, recognisable by the Tyler to show that the Lodge had been Called Off would be necessary. How should this be done?

By the use of the Wardens' Columns of course, and as we know they are raised and lowered at the Opening and Closing of the Lodge and the same applies when Calling Off and Calling On.

These days, of course, the whole thing is spoken out loud by the Master and Junior Warden and the single knock associated with it is done in reverse, i.e. the Junior Warden first then the Senior Warden and finally the Master as the Lodge is Called Off.

A Lodge maybe 'Called Off' at the Master's discretion; it is not to be done in the middle of a ceremony and there is no particular degree associated with 'Calling Off'.

The Board of General Purposes ruled on 8 March 1961 that: *'...it recommends that the Master of a Lodge should be permitted to make a short break in the proceedings at a suitable time during a meeting provided that the Lodge is properly Called Off and Called On again'.*

It is not uncommon in some old Lodges - who are inclined to start their Installation meeting early - for there to be a break at some time during the Installation Ceremony, usually after the Inner Workings when Brethren take a comfort break. In the United States it is common for Lodges to Call Off for a 'libation'.

Finally, there is also a very practical purpose for 'Calling Off and On'. In some countries such as India and Australia where Freemasonry is practised and where temperatures in a Lodge room can get quite high, it makes sense to have a break in proceedings to allow Brethren to take a break and refresh themselves.

##END##

Recommended use of Nuggets

Nuggets offer a short, simple and readily absorbed means of progressing Masonic knowledge and an easy way to introduce learning to Lodges and Chapters. It is hoped that they will become a regular feature of Lodge and Chapter meetings as well as a source for private-study.

Nuggets can be included as an item in the summons and read at most Lodge/Chapter meetings. They can be:

- Read by either a new or an experienced Mason with the minimum of preparation and practice; *though ideally, they need to be read a few times beforehand.*
- Themed with the meeting or activity.
- Used to initiate a discussion within a Lodge/Chapter, LOI/COI, or group.
- Read at home and shared as a topic for a future discussion.
- Used as a focus for an unplanned, informal discussion.

For further nuggets and other learning materials visit “Solomon” at <http://solomon.ugle.org.uk>

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