



NUGGET

Lodge Raffles

'Buy a lucky raffle ticket, Brother...'

Summary: Advice on the rules surrounding Masonic raffles.

We can imagine the scene. You are standing at the bar before dinner with a medicinal pint raised towards your lips, when a cheery Steward advances towards you with cloakroom tickets clutched in one hand and a collecting pot in the other. He announces: *'Buy a lucky raffle ticket, Brother, all for a good cause. £1 each, or today's special price, £4 a strip...?'* Well, what on earth is wrong with that?

Possibly quite a lot, if you are a Freemason. The Charities Act of 2006 was open to some misinterpretation and so Grand Lodge issued a letter of guidance a few years ago (February 2009) pointing out some of the pitfalls.

They suggested that such a raffle constitutes a small lottery, and according to the Act, is lawful only when:

- the draw is made during that evening only and
- the entire proceeds of the evening (including the lottery) are devoted to purposes other than private gain

You may well say that we have always complied with both of these. However, Grand Lodge went on to advise:

- English Law requires the specific purpose for which the lottery is held to be clearly stated before the first ticket is offered for sale.
- A discounted ticket price works against the impecunious Mason who cannot afford to purchase a large number. Furthermore, English Law requires all chances in a lottery to be equal. Therefore, all tickets in a Lodge lottery must cost the same price.

Lastly, Grand Lodge stated:

- Such a lottery should normally only be used (i.e. there may be an approved exception) to raise money for charity, for comparable benevolent purposes, or some other objective not connected with private gain. In no circumstances should any form of lottery be used to defray the general running expenses of a Lodge, Province or District.

Much depends on the interpretation of 'private gain'. If the proceeds of a raffle were nominally donated towards a Lodge Hospitality Fund say, but wine was restricted to the Master, Lodge guests and his senior colleagues on the top table then a measure of private gain might be assumed.

What conclusions may we draw? Our Lodges are generally well administered, but should any Lodge Treasurer be thinking of holding a raffle simply to balance the Lodge books he is advised to stop straight away. In brief, both he and his Lodge may have some very difficult questions to answer ... and perhaps not only to Province.

Moral - If Lodge funds are low, raise the subscription, chaps, and let Masters pay for their own wine; it is the only safe way to go!





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.

*Note: All biblical passages are taken from the Authorized King James version unless otherwise specified.

For further papers and other learning materials visit *Solomon* at <http://solomon.ugle.org.uk>

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