



PAPER

The Grand Pursuivant According to Fred & Charlie



Summary: Free and accepted from operative through speculative to the present day.

Pursuivant (from *sivre*, to follow. Fr.)

1. A junior heraldic official
2. A messenger with the power to execute warrants
3. An attendant

The Oxford English Dictionary

Fred was seated on the lawn in the comforting shade of a newly leafed tree, *Preceptor's Handbook* on lap and editing pencil in hand. Like painting the Forth Bridge this revision was happily never-ending. His gradual descent into a blissful nap was rapidly reversed by the simultaneous arrival of Charlie, a tray, a jug of fruit juice, ice cubes, two glasses and a dish of nibbles.

'Your wife certainly gives you the Ritz treatment, doesn't she?' jested Charlie.

'Ah, but think of what she gets in return' responded Fred a touch too easily, his rather fragile domestic memory striving to remember just what she actually received.

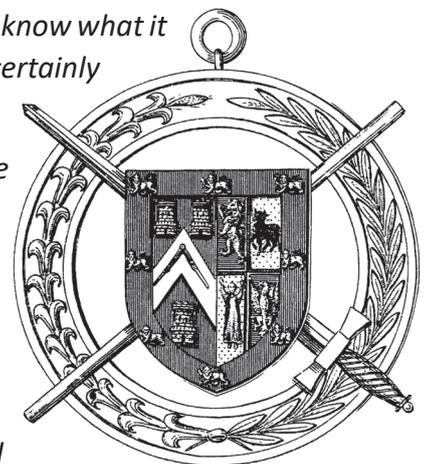
'Any news?'

'Oh yes, I ran into Peter. He's getting Pursuivant in this year's Honours. Doesn't know what it involves though. The chaps tell him it's just a glorified Tyler-with- attitude. It certainly has a smashing coloured badge. What's it all about, Fred?'

'Well, its far more than Tyler. We know that in 1822 at least one Province paid some officers the princely sum of ten shillings (50p) each for every meeting they attended. They were the Tyler, the Pursuivant and the Assistant Secretary - so clearly, they all had different duties. In fact, Charlie, the badge perhaps gives us the clue.'

'It's two crossed swords over a coat of arms, isn't it?'

'Close, Charlie, close. It's actually a crossed Pole and Sword over the United Grand Lodge's coat of arms.'



'How's that helpful, Fred?'

'From our romantic history, Charlie. In the days of old when knights were bold etc, the Pursuivant at Arms, to use his correct title, was part of a knight's retinue and announced his master's presence by a prominent display of his master's coat of arms emblazoned on his shield, indeed right up to the moment of joust or combat. So, at say Provincial Grand Lodge, the Pursuivant stands at the hall entrance carrying his master's coat of arms on his apron to announce to all those outside that his 'master', the Provincial Grand Master, is present. As a Provincial Grand Master normally has no independent arms the badge carried is always that of the Grand Master of the UGLE.'

Charlie broke in.

'A Worshipful Master hasn't got a coat of arms so that's presumably the reason that we don't have a Pursuivant in ordinary Lodges? I can understand the badge now but how about the sword, Fred, and what's the pole for?'

'The 1841 Constitutions gives us a clue, Charlie. If I open my book here, it reads:

The Grand Pursuivant is to preside over the Brethren nominated to attend within the Porch of Grand Lodge. He is at every meeting of the Grand Lodge to preserve order in the Porch and with the assistance of the Brethren nominated for attendance there, to see that none, except those who are qualified, and who have the proper clothing and jewels, and have signed their names to the accustomed papers, and are in all respects entitled to admission, be admitted.'

Charlie suggested.

'Presumably the Sword's to assist his colleague, the Tyler, at the Entrance to keep off all intruders and Cowan's to Masonry.'

Fred nodded.

'The Pole is rather like the Deacon's wand. It demonstrates that the carrier has the authority of his master (the Provincial Grand Master) to carry out his assigned duties.'

'So what are his duties today, Fred?'

'Today? It's normally the Provincial Grand Pursuivant's duty to guard the door of Provincial Grand Lodge and to announce all applicants for admission into the Provincial Grand Lodge by their names and Masonic titles; to take charge of the jewels, regalia and Warrants of the Provincial Grand Lodge in transit; to attend all meetings of Provincial Grand Lodge and, the catch-all, perform such other duties as may be required by the Provincial Grand Master or presiding officer!

Duties certainly vary from one Province to another. In at least one Province I've come across, an overworked Provincial team used the Pursuivant's rarely-used authority to attend all Lodges of Instruction in the Province and submit reports on their progress.'

'With all that as background why isn't the Office of Pursuivant given greater recognition, Fred?'

'Well, Members perhaps just see it as ranking alongside the Stewards (its only 82nd on the Grand Lodge seniority list) and don't realise its great antiquity. The Antient's Grand Lodge appointed a Pursuivant as long ago as 1752 well before the Deacons were thought of. It became an Honorary Office in UGLE carrying Grand Rank status in 1840, about 200 years ago.'

'The 1841 Constitutions certainly gave the Office of Pursuivant some authority over Brethren outside the Lodge. It was left to the customs of each Province and the imagination of the Provincial Grand Master how best to use him. Supervision of the Lodges of Instruction is certainly one creative opportunity.'

Fred chuckled.

'There are some Preceptors I have known though who might have another opinion but that debate is perhaps for another day.'

'Charlie, remember, whether the appointment's Senior Warden, Pursuivant or Steward it's a wonderful opportunity to see the Province and meet new Lodge members. The Provincial team is the best club in the world during your year. Tell Peter to enjoy every single moment.'



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- Read at home for private study
- Shared for pre-reading by members of a discussion group
- Read aloud in Lodge or Chapter, or in an LOI/COI/new members forum
 - Followed by 'any questions'
 - As a precursor to a discussion (in which case much more time is needed, possibly more than double that allocated to the paper itself)
 - Supported by audio-visual aids, if necessary

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If the paper is to be used to introduce a discussion, the presenter will need to have thought about the material, done a little research, and prepared some open questions to engage with the audience. Kipling's dictum can be of help in preparing open questions, which should begin with one of his 'serving men', as follows: *'I keep six honest serving men (they taught me all I knew). Their names are, What and Why and When and How and Where and Who'*. Rudyard Kipling

*Note: All biblical passages are taken from the Authorized King James version and any reference to ritual will be from Emulation unless otherwise specified.

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Fred and Charlie character drawings courtesy of Eddie Wildman.

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