

THE SCHAW STATUTES OF 1598
(With Orthographic Revision and Commentary)

by
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King James the Sixth of Scotland ("Jamie Saxt") became King James the First of England upon the death of Queen Elizabeth I in 1603. In 1601, he was made a Mason in Lodge Scoon and Perth in central Scotland.{1} The same year, William Sinclair of Roslyn was named Grand Master, and the office was made hereditary.{2.}

In this time of political and Masonic mileposts, William Schaw (or Shaw) was "Master of the Work" for the kingdom of Scotland. His task was to supervise the work of operative Masons on behalf of the King. Attention must be called to the fact that the offices of Master of Work and Grand Master were quite distinct. The Master of Work was responsible to see that the masons' craft was soundly practiced and that the rewards therefore were not unfairly distributed. The Grand Master's role was to serve as advocate for the Craft at court. English sovereigns similarly appointed "Masters' of the King's Work." A large body of their records is still available in the Public Record Office in London.

Why were both a "Master of Work" and a "Grand Master" needed at that time? In contrast with the square, level, and plumb which the Master of the Work applied to the stones and practice of the operative Masons within the King's dominions, the Grand Master of 1601 was charged with the task of taking the interests of the Craft to court.

The advisability of having both a qualified supervisor of Masonry and a laird with access to court to serve as Grand Master can be better understood when it is remembered that in 1424, Henry VI (admittedly, in England) assented to a law that forbade Masons to "confederate themselves in Chapters and Assemblies." Masons, alone of all the guilds, who met in such convocations were to be "judged for Felons," should they so meet. {3.} About the time the Regius Poem was written, the religious reformer Wyclif argued that Masons gathered to increase their wages. {4.} Admittedly, the law cited was for a different country and an earlier age, but the consideration remained the same. Absolute monarchs did not promote the welfare of independent bodies, such as a Grand Lodge of operative Masons. They might be tempted to set prices and

1. YEAR BOOK OF THE GRAND LODGE OF ANTIENET FREE AND ACCEPTED MASONSON OF SCOTLAND, Edinburgh: 1987, p. 50.

2. Ibid.

3. Cited, G. G. Coulton, MEDIEVAL FAITH AND SYMBOLISM, p. 125.

4. Ibid.

determine practices without prior reference to the royal will. Therefore Scottish Masons at the dawn of the seventeenth century sought to balance the direction they received from the Crown through the Master of Work with a Grand Master to represent their cause at court. A vestige of this practice may be seen in the Scottish universities today, where rectors are elected by the students to represent them at the highest levels of university administration.

In contrast with the city guilds, whose influence was local, such a body of Masons, whose itinerancy distinguished them from city guilds, could control the building trade of the nation. Although these Statutes indicate that by 1598 in Scotland there was a general Assembly of Masons, [5] that body was convened by the royal representative, William Schaw. It would appear from the lines of this document that the function of the Masonic "assembly or meeting" was to bring bad workmanship or administration to light for correction and to receive and approve the statutes handed down by the Master of Work in the King's name. However, attendance at the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, Annual General Meetings of Scottish Boy Scouts or Boys' Brigade, the deliberations of my Mother Lodge, St. Andrew Lochlee No. 282, or any other forum in Scotland where issues are taken seriously suggests that the willingness of Scots to argue their points of view is not just a recently acquired trait or a passing fashion. There is a long and profound heritage of individual worth and expression in Scotland. How richly we would be rewarded if only we could read between the lines of this document and be privileged to share the discussion and debate of Schaw's Masonic assembly of 1598.

In 1598, William Shaw promulgated, as Master of Work, a list of statutes and ordinances to be observed by the Craft in Scotland. This document was published by the Grand Lodge of Scotland with the original spelling in 1953. [5] The 1598 version will present substantial difficulty in comprehension to the American reader. Spelling, therefore, has been modernized here. In addition, Shaw began the first article, "Item First," and each successive article, "Item," without a number. I have taken the liberty to substitute numbers for the "items," supposing that Shaw would do the same thing, could he offer this document today.

The advantage of current spelling to the modern reader is suggested by the first sentence. The original reads, "At Edinburgh the xxviiij day of December the zeir of God ImVc four scoir awchtene zeirie."

5. Articles 20 ff.

6. YEAR BOOK, P. 91.

WILLIAM SCHAW'S STATUTES AND ORDINANCES OF 1598

At Edinburgh the 28th day of December the year of God 1598. The Statutes and Ordinances to be observed by all the Master Masons within the realm set down by William Schaw, Master of Work to His Majesty, and general wardens of the said Craft with the consent of the Masters after specified.

1. That they observe and keep all the good Ordinances set down of before concerning the priviledges of their Craft by their predecessors of good memory, and especially that they be true to one another and live charitably together as becomes sworn brethren and companions of Craft.

2. That they be obedient to their Wardens, Deacons, and Masters in all things concerning their craft.

3. That they be honest, faithful, and diligent in their calling and deal uprightly with the masters or owners of the works that they shall take in hand, be it undertaken as a duty, for meat and other consideration, or for weekly wages.

4. That none take upon hand any work great or small which he is not able to perform qualifiedly under the pain of forty pounds money or else the fourth part of the worth and value of the said work and that by and after as appropriate amends and satisfaction to be made to the owners of the work at the sight and discretion of the general Warden, or in his absence, at the sight of the Wardens, Deacons, and Masters of the Sherifffdom where the said work is enterprised and wrought.

5. That no Masters shall take another Master's work over his head after that the first Master has agreed with the owner of the work, either by contract, articles, or verbal conditions, under the pain of forty pounds.

6. That no Master shall take the working of any work that other Masters have worked at, before the time that the first workers be satisfied for the work which they have done, under the pain aforesaid.

7. That there be one Warden chosen and elected each year to have the charge over every Lodge as they are divided particularly and that by the votes of the Masters of the said Lodges and consent of the warden general, if he happens to be present, and otherwise that he be advised that such a Warden is chosen for such a year to the effect that ther Warden-general may send such directions to that Warden elected as ordinary business.

8. That no Master shall take any more apprentices than three during his lifetime without a special consent of the whole

Wardens, Deacons, and Masters of the Sherifffdom where the aforesaid apprentice that is to be received dwells and remains.

9. That no Master receive any apprentice bound for fewer years than seven at the least and similarly is shall not be lawful to make the said apprentice Brother and Fellow-in-Craft until the time that he has served the space of other seven years after the conclusion of his said apprenticeship without a special licence granted by the Wardens, Deacons, and Masters assembled for that cause and that sufficient trial be taken of the Worthiness, qualifications, and skill of the person that desires to be made Fellow-in-Craft and that under the pain of forty pounds to be uplifted as a pecuniary penalty from the person that is made Fellow-in-Craft against this order, beside the penalties to be set down against his person according to the order of the Lodge where he remains.

10. It shall not be lawful for any Master to sell his apprentice to any other Master nor yet to dispense with the years of his apprenticeship by selling thereof to the apprentice himself under the pain of forty pounds.

11. That no Master receive any apprentice without he signify the same to the Warden of the Lodge where he dwells, to the effect that the said apprentice and the day of his reception may be orderly booked.

12. That no apprentice be entered except by the same order, that the day of their entries may be booked.

13. That no Master or Fellow-in-Craft be received or admitted without the number of six Masters and two entered apprentices, the Warden of that Lodge being one of the said six, and that the day of the receiving of the said Fellow-of-Craft or Master be orderly booked and his name and mark inserted in the said book with the names of his six admittors and entered Apprentices and names of the instructors, that shall be chosen for every person, to be also inserted in thei book. Providing always that no man be admitted without an assay and sufficient trial of his skill and worthiness in his vocation and craft.

14. That no Master work any Masonic work under charge or command of any other craftsman that takes upon hand or upon himself the working of any Masonic work.

15. That no Master or Fellow-of-Craft receive any cowans to work in his society or company nor send any of his servants to work with cowans under pain of twenty pounds so often as any person offends thereunto.

16. It shall not be lawful for any entered Apprentice to take any other greater task or work upon hand from an owner than will extend to the sum of ten pounds under the pain aforesaid, to wit twenty pounds, and that task being done they shall enterprise no more without license of the Masters or Wardens where they

dwell.

17. If any question, strife, or variance shall fall out among any of the Masters, Servants, or entered Apprentices that the parties that fall in question or debate shall signify the cause of their quarrel to the particular Wrdens or Deacons of their Lodge within the space of twenty-four hours under the pain of ten pounds to the effect that they may be reconciled and agreed and that their variance removed by the said Wardens, Deacons, and Masters and if any of the said parties shall happen to remain willful or obstinate, that they shall be deprived of the privilege of the Lodge and not permitted to work thereat until the time that they shall submit themselves to reason at the sight of their Wardens, Deacons, and Masters as said is.

18. That all Masters enterprizers of works be very careful to see their scaffolds and footgangs surely set and placed to the effect that through their negligence and sloth no hurt or scathe come unto any person that works at the said work under the pain of discharging of them thereafter to work as Masters having charge of any work but shall ever be subject all the rest of their days to work under or with another principal Master having charge of the work.

19. That no Master receive or harbor another Master's Apprentice or Servant that shall happen to run away from his Master's service nor entertain him in his company after that he has gotten knowledge thereof under the pain of forty pounds.

20. That all persons of the Mason's Craft convene in time and place being lawfully warned under the pain of ten pounds.

21. That all the Masters that shall happen to be sent for to any assembly or meeting shall be sworn by their great oath that they shall hide nor conceal no faults or wrongs done by one to another nor yet the faults of wrongs that any man has done to the owners of the works that they have taken in hand so far as they know and that under the pain of ten pounds to be taken up from the concealors of the said faults.

22. It is ordained that all these aforesaid penalties shall be lifted and taken up from the offenders and breakers of these ordinances by the Wardens, Deacons, and Masters of the Lodges where the offenders dwell and to be distributed "ad pios usus" according to good conscience by the advice of the aforesaid. And for fulfilling and observing of these ordinances set down, as is said, the whole Masters convened the aforesaid day bind and obligate themselves hereto faithfully and therefore have requested their said Warden general to subscribe their presents with his own hand to the effect that one authentic copy hereof may be sent to every particular Lodge within this realm.

(s) William Schaw
Master of Work

Comparison of the Regius Poem with this document reveals a remarkable affinity of spirit and intent of fifteen articles and fifteen points of the former with the latter. Both were designed to codify regulation of the stone builders trade. Schaw specified penalties, gave clues as to its provenance, and made no appeal to antiquity, in contrast with the Regius manuscript.

The term, "general Wardens" appears several times. A modern equivalent term would be District (or Provincial) Grand Master, i.e., the supervisor for a particular area. A Warden, assisted by Deacons, was in charge of a Lodge in 1598. There were only two degrees or grades, Entered Apprentice and Fellow-of-Craft or Master. A Master carried out a specific project, assisted by and training apprentices, under the supervision of the Warden of his Lodge.

In item 15, "cowans" are mentioned. CHAMBERS TWENTIETH CENTURY DICTIONARY, p. 244} defines cowans as, "a dry-stone-diker [one who builds stone walls without mortar]; a mason who never served an apprenticeship; and one who tries to enter a Freemason's lodge, or the like, surrepticiously."

The Schaw Statues, then, offer a canon of ethics for the Masons in Scotland who raised the magnificent structures of 139 years before the founding of Grand Lodge. Essentially, this is a proclamation of morality. Please note that there are no regulations as to the richness of mortar or the squareness of stones. Instead, human relationships, fairness, equity, and the essential moral qualities of operative Masons are set forth.

William Schaw is principally remembered for these great and important moral lessons. Let us hope that his Masons were respected for practicing his precepts and that we may be remembered for exemplifying in public the moral duties we have been taught in the Lodge.

7. W. & R. Chambers, Edinburgh: 1952, p. 244.

THE TRIPLE TAU

By S. Flory Diehl

In 1961 an officer whom I had appointed in Line in our R. A. Chapter asked me to explain the significance of the R. A. emblem - the Triple Tau. I didn't know the answer, and when I tried to find the answer it seemed that everyone I asked was as confused as I was.

A considerable amount of research followed and I found much of interest concerning the Tau Cross but little of a concrete nature as to the significance of the Triple Tau as the R. A. emblem.

There was so much speculation and supposition on the subject that when I attempted to put my findings together in this paper, I was tempted to give up and choose another subject.

The Cross is both a symbol of death and a symbol of life. The Cross which was a cruel instrument of capital punishment in ancient times has now become a sacred symbol of religion, almost worldwide. Only the lowest class of criminals and slaves were executed on the cross by the Romans.

There were three basic types of crosses: The Tau Cross "T" often called St. Anthony's cross; the Latin Cross "+"; and St. Andrew's Cross "X". Tradition tells us that Christ died on the Latin Cross.

The Cross, as the acknowledged symbol of Christianity, did not occur until the time of the Roman Conqueror, Constantine. The conversion of Constantine is attributed to his experiencing the vision of a cross in the sky, accompanied by the words, "In this sign you will conquer." and you know history students remember that the next day he won a decisive victory. About 1,000 B.C. the Phoenicians began to use graphic signals. What we call T, the 20th letter of our alphabet, they gave the name "taw" meaning mark. About 900 B.C., the Greeks borrowed the sign from the Phoenicians and altered its shape slightly to give it the characteristic capital T form, and it became the 19th letter of the Greek alphabet. They also changed the name to tau. This Greek form passed unchanged to the Roman alphabet.

The tau cross is also known as the cross of St. Anthony because it is the cross on which St. Anthony is said to have suffered martyrdom. Among the Ancients the "tau cross" was a symbol of eternal life. It was used among the Egyptians as was to be seen in all their temples, very often held in the hands of their deities or suspended from their necks.

In the initiation in Hindostan, the tau cross under the name of "Tiluk" was marked upon the candidate as a sign that he

was set apart for sacred mysteries. In Ezechial 9:4 we read, "Go thru the midst of the city, thru the midst of Jerusalem, and mark Thau (or Tau) upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and morn for all the abominations that are committed in the midst thereof." This mark was to distinguish them as persons to be saved from those who were to be slain.

In ancient times the tau cross was set as a mark on those who had been acutitted by their judges. It was also used to mark the forehead of soldiers who had escaped unhurt from battle.

The Triple Tau is the most sacred emblem of the Royal Arch, sumbolizing the fact that those who have attained the Sublime Degree of Royal Arch are consecrated and separated, or set apart, as the recipients of a sublime but hidden wisdom.

The Triple Tau is formed by three tau crosses meeting in a point. It is enscribed in a triangle and encompassed by a circle, both emblems of the Deity. In England it is so highly esteemed as to be called the "emblem of emblems" and the "Grand emblem of Royal Arch Masonry." It was adopted in the same form, as the Royal Arch Badge, by the General Grand Chapter of the U.S. in 1859.

The original significance of the Tirple Tau has many explanations. After all of the speculation and conjecture as to how the Tripel Tau originated, it may be that the number "3" has such masonic significance especially in the Royal Arch Degree that they picked the tau cross because of its significance and just put three of them together to form the Triple Tau.

The Tau is a mark or sign of favorable distinction, and with all this allusion we may, therefore, suppose the Triple Tau to be used in the Royal Arch Degree, as a mark of designating and separating those who know and worship the true name of God, from those who are ignorant of that august mystery.