



# PAPER

## Masonic Etiquette.

**Summary:** A guide to Masonic Etiquette for new Masons.

### Introduction

It is often said that a Mason bears a greater burden of etiquette than a non-Mason;<sup>1</sup> being subject to a collection of the courtesies, observances, rules and requirements, essential to maintaining harmony in a Lodge. Together they support a culture of moral integrity and good taste, which guide and shape our behaviour to each other and the rest of the world.<sup>2</sup>

The following sections are designed to help new Masons cope with what can seem a confusing and sometimes apparent conflicting set of practices and protocols. They are not definitive, nor extensive, given the depth of Masonic etiquette and wide variation in practice from Lodge to Lodge, but act as a general-guide and the starting point for a conversation with a Lodge mentor, DC, Preceptor, or knowledgeable Lodge member.



**If in doubt ask.**

### Punctuality

As a matter of regularity the Lodge should be opened on time in accordance with the time shown on the Summons. Although this is the responsibility of the Master, it often falls to the Director of Ceremonies to see that things begin on time. He will often give members a five or ten minute warning of the imminent opening of the Lodge, and check to see that everyone is seated and in position before the Lodge is opened. So, don't be surprised if your DC has become harassed and frustrated by recalcitrant members and harries latecomers to get them signed-in and seated in time for the opening. With that in mind, Brethren should organise themselves to be in attendance in good time to make the opening; only in the most exceptional circumstances (which happens to us all) should a Brother arrive after the Lodge has opened.<sup>3</sup>

**Always give yourself a little extra time.**

## Dress

Check the summons, ask your fellow Brethren, or Mentor, or possibly the Lodge DC, to make yourself aware of the practice and protocols concerning the Lodge, the occasion; all of which may affect how you dress. Make sure that you have everything with you that you may need, such as apron, gloves, jewels, tie, etc. When you arrive, take a look at what your companions are wearing and check yourself over before you enter, or better still get someone else to check you over, and vice versa.

**Brethren should always be properly dressed when entering a Lodge.**

## Welcoming visitors

Etiquette includes courtesy and courtesy embraces hospitality to visiting Brethren of whatever rank. It should be the responsibility of every member of the Lodge to extend a warm welcome to every visitor as soon as he enters the building. Perhaps starting with a handshake and progressing with a few simple questions such as:

*Have you visited us before? Where are you from? Have you come far? Do you have any friends in this Lodge? Have you come tonight for a special reason? Please tell me about your Lodge?*

Or offers of help:

*May I show you the robing room? Would you care to see the Temple?*

*Can I offer you a drink or some refreshment? Let me introduce you to our Worshipful Master?*

What you say is up to you, but we should never be at a loss to know what to say to a visiting Brother.<sup>4</sup>

**Make him feel welcome.**

## Saluting

When a Lodge is opened or closed, raised or lowered, it will be necessary to 'stand to order'. So, check what Degree is being worked and make sure that you know how and when to stand to order; it might even be worth a quick practice. Given other Brethren will inevitably do their own Lodge's version of standing to order, which can be very confusing, especially when visiting.

You may notice that other Brethren will inevitably do their own Lodge's version of standing to order, whilst others mirror the actions of the members of the host Lodge. Which can be very confusing, especially when visiting.

You will also be expected to salute the Master, with the correct salutation to the Degree being worked, when entering or leaving a Lodge, or when addressing the Master. It is imperative to know what to do. If you get it wrong, you will appear discourteous to the Lodge in general and the Master in particular. Moreover, you will feel foolish and may be teased about it afterwards; even thought to do so would be worse breach of etiquette by the perpetrator. So again, prepare, practice and proceed with courtesy and confidence. If in doubt, salute!

**Know when, where and how to salute (see Entering or leaving a Lodge on page 4).**



## Forms of address

Each rank has a particular prefix:<sup>5</sup>

**The Grand Master and Pro-Grand Master** are addressed as:

*Most Worshipful, The Grand/Pro-Grand Master*

**The Deputy & Assistant Grand Masters**

*Right Worshipful Deputy/Assistant Grand Master*

**The Provincial Grand Master**

*Right Worshipful Bro ...*

**The Deputy Provincial Grand Master**

*Very Worshipful Bro ..., or Worshipful Bro ..., dependent upon his Grand Rank*

**The Assistant Provincial Grand Masters, Grand Officers, Masters and Past Masters of a Lodge**

*Worshipful Bro ....*

**Master Masons, Entered Apprentices and Fellowcrafts**

*Brother*

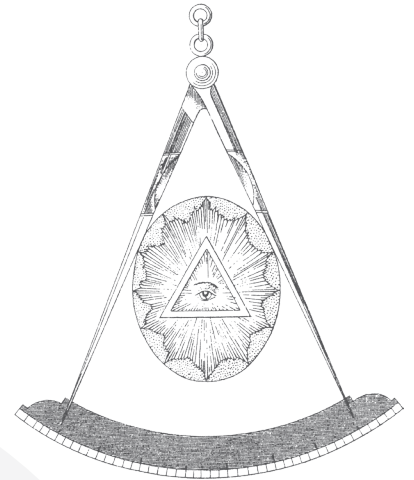
However, when performing an office in a Lodge, which has been opened, they are addressed as *Bro (Office)*, i.e. Secretary, DC, Senior/Junior Warden, etc. Hence the change from name to Office in the course of opening a Lodge.

## Salutations

Different Ranks require different forms of salutation, and different numbers of salutes; ranging from eleven Grand or Hailing signs to three Entered Apprentices signs. There are also a series of 'special salutes', given at Installation. Always ask beforehand to find out what is required, rather than being the one person giving the wrong salute, or continuing to salute when everyone else has finished. You will never hear the end of it!

## Outside the Lodge-room

This also applies to addressing Brethren outside the Lodge Temple or when communicating in the written form. It is a matter of common courtesy and etiquette to address officers, members, and visitors by their correct Masonic title and form of address, i.e. 'Worshipful Master', or 'Brother Smith'. Or in relaxed circumstances, their given name, i.e. Bro. John.



*The Grand Master and Pro Grand Master's Jewel*

## Entering or leaving a Lodge

Timing is everything. Try to time your entry, or exit from a Lodge to coincide with a natural break in the proceedings, i.e. on the conclusion of a segment of the proceedings, such as the opening, a report or greeting, or a piece of ritual; rather than making an unnecessary or untimely interruption.

Never enter or leave a Lodge without the permission of the Worshipful Master, except in an extreme emergency and even then, expect to explain why. Have something prepared to explain your reason for leaving, or for entering.

Never enter, nor leave a Lodge, without knowing what salutation is required and where and how to deliver it; what you are going to do and say and your route of entry or exit. Always know which Degree is being worked, so as to give the appropriate salutation; and ask advice if you are not sure.

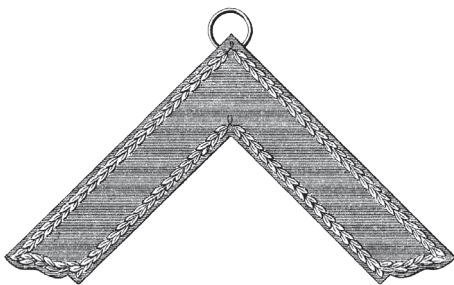
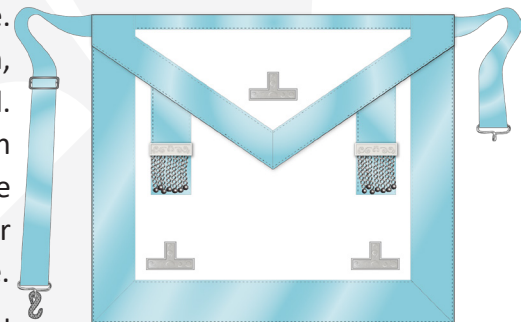
Having been announced by the Tyler and given permission to enter, or having asked and received permission to retire from the Worshipful Master. It is the norm to perambulate smartly to the NW Corner, stand at the edge of the mosaic pavement, step forward (using the appropriate step), salute (using the proper form), and either explain your reason for entry or if retiring, leave smartly. That way you will not be considered rude or discourteous.

**Best of all, get there early and have the time to discuss any issues.**

## The Master and his Wardens

He can directly, or via his Wardens, admit a Brother, or ask him to retire. He can put, or refuse, or defer, a discussion, motion, or proposition, so it is sensible and good manners to make him aware beforehand. He can rule any Brother out of order, on any subject, at any time. In the Lodge, the Master's gavel, the emblem of authority, is supreme and should be obeyed at once by every Brother, without further objection or discussion; to do otherwise could be deemed offensive.

A Lodge is 'ruled' by the Master, who is all-powerful, and whose word is law; though there are appeal procedures, in cases where Brethren feel they have been wronged, or where the Master may have acted outside the Rules & Regulations detailed in the Book of Constitutions, or the Provincial or Lodge By-laws.



**Always treat the Master and Wardens with the respect their office deserves.**

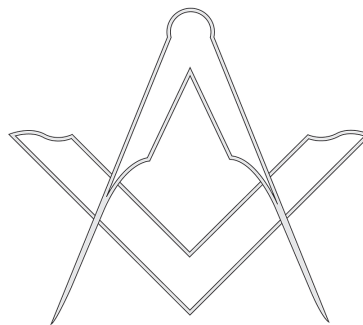
## Speaking in Lodge

If you wish to speak in the Lodge, you should do so only via the Worshipful Master and with his permission. The protocol is as follows:

- Stand and be recognised by the Worshipful Master.
- When he responds by addressing you, come to the salute.
- Should you wish to address the Lodge, the Master, or another Officer or Brother - **ask his permission.**
- State your business clearly and succinctly, and if you want to have a discussion, debate a topic, deliver a lecture, advise the Brethren about an event or social function, or give a notice of motion, make a proposition, or make a suggestion or raise an objection<sup>6</sup> - **ask his permission.**
- Never turn you back to him, move around the Lodge, or pass something round - **without his consent.**
- Always observe proper etiquette and decorum, remain calm and polite, and use proper forms of address. Any deviation from proper Masonic conduct, such as interrupting, over-talking, raising one's voice, or gesturing may - receive his admonition, or worse, force him to use his gavel to retain good order.

Ideally, you should inform the Worshipful Master and Lodge Secretary, before the meeting, as a matter of courtesy, and make your remarks at the appropriate point in the proceedings, i.e. Reports, Propositions, Any other Business. To do less is impolite and may lead to a refusal, and create disharmony in the Lodge.

**It is normal practice to stand when you whenever you speak.**

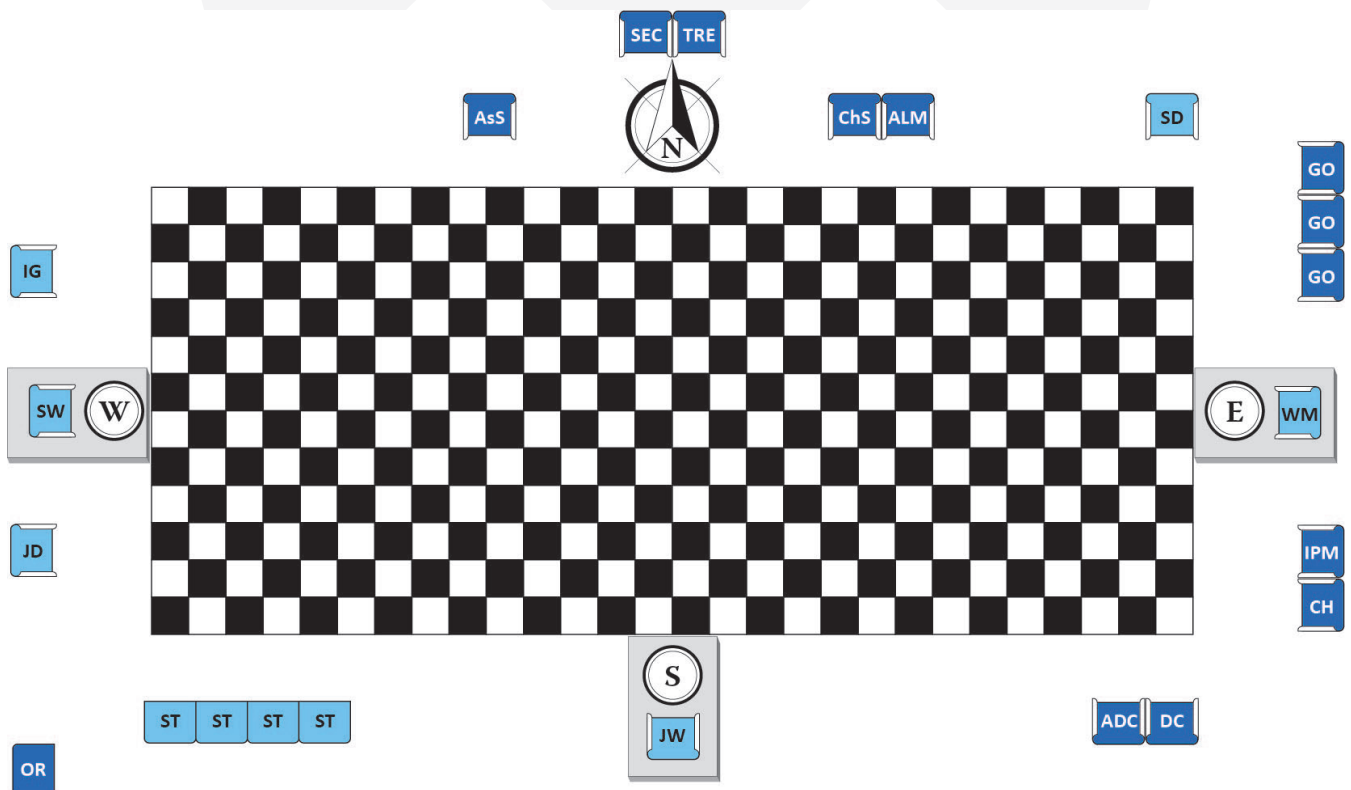


## Moving around the Lodge

*Practices vary between Lodges in respect of all the following points, so it is always best to check with your Director of Ceremonies or Preceptor to be sure of what is deemed the correct protocol in your Lodge.*

- When perambulating around the Lodge, remember to always step off with the left foot and never swing your arms or clench your fists. If there is another Brother beside you, you should match your pace to theirs
- You Square the Lodge by staying within its boundaries (though when leaving the Lodge you may pass behind the Senior Warden's chair to reach the NW corner). Walk smartly in straight lines, parallel with the edges of the carpet, making right-hand turns using recognised paths in the East, West or centre to cross the Lodge, rather than using diagonal or curving paths around the Lodge. The practice of when to Square a Lodge – or when not to – can vary between Lodges and their Ritual.
- Whenever you cross the centre line (a virtual line running between the Worshipful Master and the Senior Warden), stop, turn to face the Pedestal and standing to attention either make a court bow<sup>7</sup> or salute the Worshipful Master; dependent upon Lodge protocol.
- In some Lodges, should your path be to the dais, it is considered inappropriate to pass between the Pedestal and the East.<sup>8</sup>
- Similarly, it is considered usual for is all Masons to enter the dais from the NE, with the exception of those who occupy or have previously occupied the office of Worshipful Master who should enter from the SE.
- Perambulating around the Lodge in a clockwise direction symbolises the path of the sun.<sup>9</sup>

**Always check your own Lodge procedure**



## Sitting in the East

Brethren should generally not sit in the East except by invitation. There are some notable exceptions though such as a visiting Ruler or his representative, Grand Officers present in the Lodge and by custom, the Immediate Past Master, Chaplain,<sup>10</sup> etc. It is also, by custom and practice, rather than by right, the Master's prerogative to invite distinguished visitors, or 'special members' of the Lodge to sit with him in the East.



**Do not sit in the East unless there by custom or invitation.**

## Dignity and decorum

By following the Ceremony and responding appropriately, not interrupting proceedings, nor speaking out of turn, and chatting quietly only when there are natural breaks.

- Always use a language, tone, and posture which are suitable to both the setting and occasion.
- Talking, while a Degree is in progress, or when receiving an address or presentation is at best an annoying distraction, and at worse, a sign of irreverence for the proceedings.<sup>11</sup> Unfortunately, the offending Brethren don't seem to realise that they are disturbing their colleagues. They don't realise that they can be heard or, possibly they don't care.<sup>12</sup> In the same way, the Lodge Room is not a proper place for pranks, practical jokes, horseplay, or off-colour stories. As a rule, 'Silence is Golden'.
- Finally, don't forget to turn your mobile phone off, or better still, leave it in your case.<sup>13</sup>

**When in Lodge, you should always behave with dignity and decorum.**

## The Festive Board and social events

The after-proceedings and social events<sup>14</sup> are usually a mix of formality and informality, so it can be difficult to judge what is appropriate. If in doubt, always act with decorum, so as not to disturb the harmony of the Lodge.

Whatever you do or say, never be loud, coarse or intemperate, nor tell jokes or stories which are risqué, or offensive. Sometimes it is better to be simple, sincere and be seated.

The Festive Board is also subject to Masonic custom, protocol and etiquette.

## Visiting

If you visit another Lodge, be prepared to be tested by the Tyler. First by being asked about your own Lodge, your time in Freemasonry and your status, possibly including whether or not you are unattached,<sup>15</sup> or subject to suspension, or prohibition. He may also be required by Lodge practice or protocol, to ask to see your Grand Lodge Certificate, should you have one. Or he may even feel the need 'prove you' by signs, tokens and words, appropriate to the Degree being worked. Though these days, this level of testing is rare, especially if you are a member's guest. Whatever the circumstances, you should not resent, or resist this process, as the Tyler is only carrying out his duty to ensure that none but Masons are present.

Remember too, that visiting is not a right, but a privilege.<sup>16</sup> The Master of a Lodge is entitled to refuse to admit, as a visitor, any Brother whose presence may, in his opinion, disturb the harmony of the Lodge. Similarly, he may ask a visitor to remain outside the Lodge or retire early, or for a short time, if the Lodge is conducting private business.<sup>17</sup>

As a visitor, check the summons and if possible ask about protocols, customs and practices. For example, some Lodges do everything sitting down or give greetings in a particular way.

Be sure to arrive in ample time. It allows to ask about practice and protocols, meet and greet the Lodge members, perhaps over a drink, pay for the meal and find a suitable place to sit and enjoy the meeting. The later you leave it, the more stressed you will be, and the less you will enjoy the evening. Worse of all, if you arrive late and either delay the start or have to enter on a report, you will appear discourteous and be a poor ambassador for your Lodge.

Finally, in general, it is usual for a visitor to rise towards the end of the proceeding and give greetings from his own Lodge, and possibly reply to the visitor's toast at the festive-board. So, it is prudent to have the correct wording for a greeting, and even have a few words tucked away in your case, just in case, you are called upon to respond at the festive-board.

**Visiting is one of the delights of Freemasonry and should always be encouraged.**

## Shouldering the Work

If you are asked to take office, perform a piece of ritual, deliver a nugget, or help in some other way to support the Lodge, by setting-up the Lodge or festive-board, organizing a social event, etc., take some time to think about it before agreeing and make sure that you can commit to the task:

- Find out exactly what is required?
- How much time is involved, for how long, and when will it start?
- Will it mean an ongoing commitment to a range of roles or tasks?
- Is it within your knowledge, ability and skills?
- Is there some cost or travelling involved?
- Is it something you will enjoy doing?
- Is it the right-time in your Masonic Journey to take on this role or task?

Above all, discuss it with your proposer, seconder, or mentor and make sure that you can do it without detriment to your work or family.

**It is good to accept office, ritual, or supportive tasks when asked to do so.<sup>18</sup>**



## References

1. Chris Aniche Okorafor, (2008), *Masonic Etiquette: A Testament to some*. [http://www.freemasons-freemasonry.com/masonic\\_etiquette.html](http://www.freemasons-freemasonry.com/masonic_etiquette.html) [Accessed 21 January 2020].
2. The Regius Poem, or Halliwell Manuscript, is the oldest Masonic document in existence and is a 64-page poem of 'Moral Duties' written in Middle-English, much of which is in rhyming couplets. It was first published in Texas in 1840, as 'A poem on the Constitutions of Masonry' by Mr James Orchard Halliwell from a manuscript in the Kings Library of the British museum. The Regius Poem, Halliwell Manuscript, (2012), *Pietre Stones Review of Freemasonry*, <http://www.freemasons-freemasonry.com/regius.html> [Accessed 21 January 2020].
3. Hollins Ray, (2005), *A Daily Advancement in Masonic Knowledge: a compilation of short talks, Masonic Etiquette*.
4. Ibid.
5. The various ranks in Freemasonry and their precedence are set out in the Book of Constitutions and Administrative Regulations, (2019), [www.ugle.org.uk/about/book-of-constitutions](http://www.ugle.org.uk/about/book-of-constitutions), [Accessed 21 January 2020].
6. *Masonic Etiquette, Protocol, & Decorum: Information on Masonic Etiquette, Objections from the Floor & Rebuke* (2014), The Masonic Trowel, [http://www.themasonictrowel.com/education/others\\_files/masonic\\_etiquette\\_protocol.htm#16](http://www.themasonictrowel.com/education/others_files/masonic_etiquette_protocol.htm#16) [Accessed 21 January 2020].
7. A Court bow is one using the head only; not the waist. It is given by standing perfectly erect and simply bowing the heading in a nodding motion, then proceeding onward.
8. Symbolically it is believed that nothing should interrupt the three Great Lights from shining their eternal light and wisdom upon the Master to help him rule and govern the Lodge. *Masonic Etiquette, Learn the Dos and Don'ts of Masonic Etiquette, Masonic Lodge of Education, 1. Walking between the altar and the Worshipful Master*. <http://www.masonic-lodge-of-education.com/masonic-etiquette.html> [Accessed 21 January 2020].
9. You may notice that whenever a Worshipful Master or Warden enters or leaves his chair, he does so, from left to right, in a clockwise direction.
10. *Masonic Etiquette, Learn the Dos and Don'ts of Masonic Etiquette, Masonic Lodge of Education, 2. Sitting in the East*, *ibid*.
11. Symbolically the Lodge room is a Temple of the Great Architect of the Universe, *Masonic Etiquette, Learn the Dos and Don'ts of Masonic Etiquette, Masonic Lodge of Education, 5. Talking*, *Ibid*.
12. J. Kirk Nicholson, Jr., (2019), *Masonic Etiquette*, [https://www.masonicworld.com/education/files/artdec01/masonic\\_eti.htm](https://www.masonicworld.com/education/files/artdec01/masonic_eti.htm) [Accessed 21 January 2020].
13. *Masonic Etiquette, Learn the Dos and Don'ts of Masonic Etiquette, Masonic Lodge of Education, 20. Turn cell-phones Off*, <http://www.masonic-lodge-of-education.com/masonic-etiquette.html> [Accessed 21 January 2020].
14. Chris Aniche Okorafor, (2008), *Masonic Etiquette: A Testament to some*, [http://www.freemasons-freemasonry.com/masonic\\_etiquette.html](http://www.freemasons-freemasonry.com/masonic_etiquette.html) [Accessed 21 January 2020].
15. Book of Constitutions Craft Rule 127(ii): *Book of Constitutions*, (2019), [www.ugle.org.uk/about/book-of-constitutions](http://www.ugle.org.uk/about/book-of-constitutions) [Accessed 21 January 2020].
16. Though a ruler may demand admission. In the case of Provincial Ruler to Lodges within his Province, and in the case of a high ruler to any Province or Lodge, within the English Constitution: *Ibid*.
17. This too, does not apply to a ruler - *Ibid*.
18. *Masonic Etiquette, Learn the Dos and Don'ts of Masonic Etiquette, Masonic Lodge of Education, 13. Shouldering the Work*, <http://www.masonic-lodge-of-education.com/masonic-etiquette.html> [Accessed 21 January 2020].



## Recommended use of Papers

Papers offer a simple, direct means of advancement in a particular aspect of Masonic knowledge. They can be used in a variety of ways:

- 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

They can be delivered by a single person or split into bite-sized pieces and read by multiple presenters (in which case, the speaker(s) should have read and practiced the delivery of the paper beforehand).

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.

For further papers and other learning materials visit *Solomon* at [solomon.ugle.org.uk](http://solomon.ugle.org.uk)

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