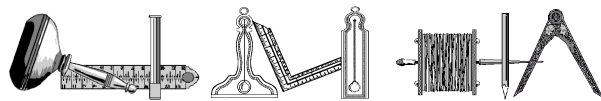


So over the years there have been a number of different spellings- Schivit, ,skivet and in 1852 it appeared as Skirret. But the use of a piece of string to mark out ground and indeed metal has been an Artificer's 'tool' for many years. However, the Skirret does have a moral significance in that we must lay stress on the 'Straight and undeviating line' rather than the tool itself. Hence the Skirret points out that straight and undeviating line of conduct to the Volume of the Sacred Law.

So in this degree the Working Tools remind us that we are accountable to God for our behaviour in life. This is no substitute for the teaching of your religion with regard to salvation. Freemasonry expects you to obey moral standards and use your talents for the glory of God and the benefit of your fellow mortals, all within the context of your religion. It does not pretend to guarantee eternal life and salvation but only insists that while faith is the first essential, we must be constructive in our attitudes to life and our works must be in accord with our faith.

The Working Tools of a Master Mason complete the three sets of Working Tools used in the three Degrees, and speculatively you can see how all the tools are used to lead a Freemason from a rough, uneducated state, through a learning stage and onto a higher level of understanding and self-awareness.



Produced by the District of Cyprus Mentoring Team - August 2012
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District of Cyprus Mentoring Programme

A series of Fact Sheets for a
Master Mason

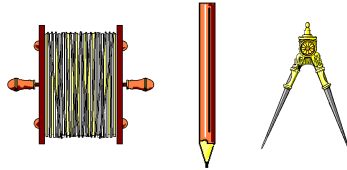
MM 02 The Working Tools of a Master Mason



Making a daily advancement in Masonic knowledge

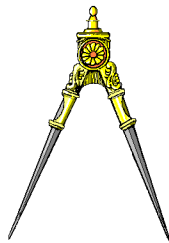
The Working Tools of a Master Mason

The Working Tools of a Master Mason were presented to you at the end of the Ceremony of Raising. They consisted of three items - the Skirret, the Pencil and the Compasses.



The pencil is a simple tool and without it the Operative Mason would have been unable to mark out his perspective of the building or the individual components used within the building. Morally the pencil teaches us that our words and actions are observed and recorded by the Almighty Architect to whom we must give an account of our conduct through life.

The Compasses that we use in our proceedings are what we would call, in this modern age, dividers. But the original Compasses were exactly like that – one point would be presented to the stone and the other point would be used to draw an arc or a circle. They would also be used as dividers by measuring lengths, depths and widths and then transferring those readings to or from the draft or plan. The Compasses are one of the three Great though Emblematical Lights of Freemasonry. Individually the Compasses play a large part in our Ceremonies.

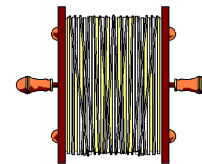


During your initiation you were told that the Compasses are to keep us in due bounds with all mankind, particularly our Brethren in Freemasonry. In the Third Degree you were told that the Compasses remind us of his unerring and impartial justice and that the points define the limits of both good and evil. At your Initiation both points of the Compasses were hidden by the Square. In the Second Degree one point was exposed and then in the

Third Degree both points were exhibited implying that you were now at liberty to work with both those points in order to render the circle of your Masonic duties complete.

The Compasses are also represented on various articles of Regalia, and also appear within the Collar Jewels of the following Brethren:-

The Grand Master and Past Grand Master
Pro Grand Master and Past Pro Grand Master
Deputy Grand Master and Past Deputy Grand Master
Assistant Grand Master and Past Assistant Grand Master.
Metropolitan, Provincial and District Grand Master and
Past Metropolitan, Provincial and District Grand Master
Grand Inspector and Past Grand Inspector
The Grand Master's Order for Service to Freemasonry
All Stewards Jewels



The Skirret. We are told that the Skirret is an implement which acts on a centre pin whence a line is drawn to mark out ground for the foundation of the intended structure. The description of the implement is one that can be seen every day in the world of agriculture, whereby the farmer lays out lines to plant his seeds along the string that is unwound from the Skirret.

Unfortunately the Oxford English Dictionary provides no help as it describes the Skirret as a *Water Parsnip*, an object that does not appear in any part of our Ritual or Ceremonies! The earliest mention of a word similar in appearance and sound was in a letter dated 24 September 1816 where it was stated that *The Schivit Line represents the strict and undeviating line of duty marked out for our pursuit in the Volume of the Sacred Law*. The earliest pictorial representation of the Skirret on Tracing Boards was from circa 1871 onwards.