

THE LAYOUT OF THE LODGE AND THE SYMBOLISM OF THE FURNITURE

Not all Lodge Rooms / Temples will be laid out exactly the same, but the majority of the items covered in the following paragraphs will be part of a 'Just, Perfect and Regular Lodge'. The best way to familiarise yourself with the interior of a Freemason's Lodge / Temple is to walk round it after it has been 'set up' by the Tyler. Most Lodge Rooms / Temples will have some form of 'Check off' list which will be completed by the Assistant Director of Ceremonies. This 'Check off' list ensures that everything is in its correct position for the Ceremony. The following detailed walk round and explanation is for a standard Lodge / Temple layout in preparation for a First Degree Ceremony. Remember that your own particular Lodge Room/Temple may be slightly different from that described. A number of the 'items' mentioned in this particular 'walk round' may require a much more detailed explanation than is possible here.

The interior of a Freemason's Lodge is composed of Ornaments, Furniture and Jewels. The following Fact Sheets are relevant:-

- EA02 – The form of a Lodge.
- EA09 – Ballots and Votes.
- FC02 – The Warden's Columns.
- FC06 - The furniture of the Lodge.
- MM05- The Movable and Immovable Jewels.

Stand directly in front of the Worshipful Masters Pedestal facing East.

In front of you -

One Kneeling Stool, used by Candidates for their Obligations.

One Altar/Small Desk. Some Lodges do not have Altars. In some Lodges the Altar is in the centre of the Lodge. On the Altar, or if there is no Altar, on the Worshipful Master's Pedestal, will be the Closed Volume of the Sacred Law (VSL) which is normally on a Cushion. On top of the VSL a pair of Compasses with both points together and located within the angle of the Square. These three items together are known as the Furniture of the Lodge. They are also considered as the Three Great though Emblematical Lights in Freemasonry. The Sacred Writings to govern our faith, the Square to regulate our actions and the Compasses to keep us in due bounds with all mankind, particularly our Brethren in Freemasonry. Of all the antiquities within the Lodge/Temple the VSL is the most important. Most Lodge Bibles are the Authorised Revised Standard Version. However, some Lodges still have priceless copies of older Bibles; in fact one Lodge in England still has a copy of the Geneva Bible. Get to know your own VSL. The orientation (facing) of the VSL may vary from Lodge to Lodge. The United Grand Lodge of England does not lay down any rules on this. However, no matter which way the VSL faces the point of the Square and the points of the Compasses must be to the bottom of the page. Likewise there is no official Grand Lodge ruling on where the VSL should be open and customs vary considerably. Many say that it should be left open at where it falls open to reduce long term wear and tear – but if your Lodge specifies particular openings, then for the First Degree it could be: The Second Epistle of Peter with reference to Brotherly Kindness and Charity, or Psalm 133 with reference to:- Behold how good it is for Brethren to dwell together in unity, or Ruth Chapter 2 verse 19:- The story of Ruth and Boaz.

One Pedestal / Desk. The Pedestal, is basically a Desk behind which the Worshipful Master sits, it should be grand, spacious and carved in the Ionic Order of Architecture. On the front of the Pedestal will be the Jewel of the Worshipful Master which is the Square.

The Worshipful Masters Chair, which denotes the East, should also be grand, spacious, well - proportioned and of the Ionic Order.

The Lodge Banner, directly in front of you, above the Worshipful Master's Chair. The Banner will show the name of the Lodge and its unique Number. Every Lodge in the English Constitution must be distinguished by a name or title as well as a Number. The design of the Banner will be relevant to the name and will in all probability have a unique history of its own. You are encouraged to read the History of your Lodge.

The Charter or Warrant of the Lodge, to your left / right on the wall or on an easel close by –. The Warrant of the Lodge is specially entrusted to the Worshipful Master at his Installation and he is responsible for its safe custody during his tenure of Office. At your Initiation you were told that the Warrant is there for your inspection on this or any future evening. You are strongly recommended to read the Warrant. No Lodge may meet without a Warrant of Constitution from the Grand Master.

Walk into the Worshipful Masters Position from the North side.

The Worshipful Master and His Warden's always enter and exit their positions in a clockwise fashion, following the passage of the earth around the Sun. The Worshipful Master will therefore enter from the North side and exit from the South side. On his Chair will be his Apron; on his Apron instead of three Rosettes will be three perpendicular lines upon horizontal lines thereby forming three sets of two right angles; also his Collar with the Jewel which is a Square and his Gauntlets also showing the Square.

The Worshipful Master's Jewel is the Square and is one of the Three Moveable Jewels of the Lodge.

Face West.

On his Pedestal - One Candle in the Candle Stick holder. This represents one of the three Lesser Lights - the East, representing the Master of the Lodge. The column supporting the candle holder should be of the Ionic Order.

On his pedestal - on the right one Gavel and Gavel Block. The Gavel is an emblem of power to enable the Worshipful Master to preserve order in the Lodge especially in the East.

Under the pedestal -

One Candle Snuffer and one Box of Matches and or a Lighter.

One Book of Constitutions. In some Lodges the Worshipful Master will carry the Book of Constitutions into the Lodge/Temple during the entry procession. The importance of an up to date Book of Constitutions cannot be over emphasised – *For you will find that there is scarcely a case of difficulty can occur in the Lodge in which this Book will not set you right.*

In addition, for a First Degree there will be:-

One pair of Compasses.

One Book of Constitutions for the Candidate.

One Set of By Laws.

One First Degree Ritual Book

One Set of Questions for Passing. (they are also contained in the Ritual Book).

Plus a bundle of other informative Booklets from the Secretary.

Facing West you cannot fail to be impressed by the Black and White Carpet spread out before you. This is called the Mosaic Pavement, being Variegated and Chequered. Around the outside and part of the carpet, the Indented or Tessellated Border, which refers us to the planets, which in their various revolutions form a beautiful border or skirtwork round that grand luminary, the

Sun. **The Mosaic pavement and the Indented or Tessellated Border are Ornaments of the Lodge.** In the four corners of the carpet are four Tassels meant to remind us of the four cardinal virtues; Temperance, Fortitude, Prudence and Justice. In some Lodges, particularly those that do not have carpets but have complete floors of Black and White tiles, you will see these Tassels pendent in the four corners of the Lodge/Temple.

Exit from the South side of the Worshipful Master's Chair facing South.

The next Chair is for the Immediate Past Master (IPM) - there may be no Collar on his Chair as he will have his own. However, his Jewel is a Square from which is suspended the diagram of Euclid's 47th Proposition (Problem), which is what we all know as the Theorem of Pythagoras. Next to him is the Chaplain and on his Chair his Collar with the Jewel which is an open Book on a Triangle surmounting a Glory.

Next to him the Almoner and on his Chair his Collar with the Jewel which is a Scrip Purse on which is a heart.

Next to him the Charity Steward and on his Chair his Collar with the Jewel which is a Trowel. On a Chair in front of the Almoners position will be a Blue Cushion on which will be an Apron – **For a First Degree** – An Entered Apprentice's Apron, the Badge of innocence and the bond of Friendship.

Come onto the floor of the Lodge and stand in the South East Corner facing West.

On your left will be a small table on which are placed the Working Tools of the Degree.

Now walk West towards the Junior Warden's Pedestal.

On your left the Director of Ceremonies' Wand in its Holder and on his Chair his Collar with the Jewel which is Two Rods in Saltire tied by a Ribbon.

Next the Assistant Director of Ceremonies' Wand in its Holder and on his Chair his Collar with the Jewel which is two Rods in Saltire.

Before you enter the Junior Warden's position by the East side you will see the three Tracing Boards on an Easel in front of, or adjacent to the Junior Warden's Pedestal. The Tracing Boards depict the story of the Three Degrees. Initially they were drawn on the floor of the Lodge and were known as the Lodge Boards. The words Lodge Board are still used in the Consecration Ceremony of a new Lodge. **The Tracing Boards are one of the three Immovable Jewels of the Lodge.** They are known as immovable Jewels because they lie or stand open and immovable in the Lodge for the Brethren to moralise on.

On the front of the Junior Wardens Pedestal is the Plumb Rule Emblem, the Jewel of the Junior Warden.

The Architecture of the Chair and the Pedestal should be grand, spacious, well proportioned and of the Corinthian Order. On his Chair will be his Apron, his Collar with the Jewel which is a Plumb Rule and his Gauntlets also showing the Plumb Rule. **The Junior Warden's Jewel is the Plumb Rule and is one of the Three Moveable Jewels of the Lodge.**

Standing in the Junior Warden's position Facing North -

On his Pedestal - One Candle in the Candle Stick holder. This represents one of the three Lesser Lights – the South, representing the Sun to rule the day. The column supporting the candle holder should be of the Corinthian Order.

On his pedestal - on the right one Gavel and Gavel Block. The Gavel is presented to the Junior Warden by the Worshipful Master with these words – *I therefore place in your hand this Gavel as an emblem of power to enable you to assist me and your Brother Senior Warden in preserving order in the Lodge, especially in the South.*

On his Pedestal - on the left one Column and Column Rest. The Column has a Corinthian Chapter (Capital) with a Terrestrial Globe and should be standing upright.

On his Pedestal, or adjacent to his pedestal - one large Rough Ashlar standing freely. The stone should not be quite 'rough hewn' but should show some evidence of being worked on by the Apprentices, they would have knocked off all superfluous knobs and excrescences. This represents man in his infant or primitive state, rough and unpolished. **The Rough Ashlar is one of the three Immovable Jewels of the Lodge.** They are known as immovable Jewels because they lie open and immovable in the Lodge for the Brethren to moralise on.

Under the pedestal -

One Candle Snuffer and one Box of Matches and or a Lighter.

Exit from the West side of the Junior Warden's Pedestal, face West and walk to the Senior Warden's Position.

As you pass down the South side of the Lodge towards the West -

On your left there should be a number of Stewards Collars on the front row Chairs; their Jewels consist of a Cornucopia between the legs of a pair of Compasses extended.

As you pass into the Senior Warden's position by the South side on your left should be the Junior Deacon's Wand in its Holder with the Dove bearing an Olive Leaf facing East; on his Chair, which should be facing East, his Collar with the Jewel which is a Dove bearing an Olive Branch.

Before you enter the Senior Wardens position you will see a Smooth or Perfect Ashlar suspended by a Lewis within a tripod assembly. The Smooth/Perfect Ashlar is a stone of a true die or square fit, only to be tried by the Square and Compasses. This represents man in the decline of his years after a regular well spent life in acts of piety and virtue, which can no otherwise be tried and approved than by the Square of God's word and the Compasses of his own self convincing conscience. **The Smooth or Perfect Ashlar is the last of the three Immovable Jewels of the Lodge.** They are known as immovable Jewels because they lie or stand open and immovable in the Lodge for the Brethren to moralise on. The Lewis is a device that fits into the stone and when in combination with mechanical powers, such as a system of pulleys, enabled the Operative Mason to raise great weights with little effort and fix them correctly and neatly onto their proper bases. A Lewis denotes the son of a Mason, his duty to his aged parents is to bear the heat and burden of the day, to assist in time of need. His privilege - if he is one of two Candidates being initiated on the same day then he would be the senior for the purpose of the Ceremony only.

On the front of the Senior Wardens Pedestal is the Level Emblem.

The Architecture of the Senior Warden's Chair and his pedestal should be grand, spacious, well proportioned and of the Doric Order. On his Chair will be his Apron, his Collar with the Jewel which is a Level and his Gauntlets also showing the Level. **The Senior Warden's Jewel is the Level and is one of the Three Moveable Jewels of the Lodge.**

Standing in the Senior Warden's position Facing East -

On his Pedestal - One Candle in the Candle Stick holder. This represents one of the three Lesser Lights – the West, representing the Moon to govern the night. The column supporting the candle holder should be of the Doric Order.

On his pedestal - on the right one Gavel and Gavel Block. The Gavel is presented to the Senior Warden by the Worshipful Master with these words - *I therefore place in your hand this Gavel as an emblem of power, to enable you to assist me in preserving order in the Lodge, especially in the West.*

On his Pedestal - on the left one Column and Column Rest. The Column has a Doric Chapter (Capital) with a Celestial Globe and should be horizontal resting in its Column Rest.

Under the pedestal -

One Candle Snuffer and one Box of Matches and or a Lighter.

As you look to the East, in front of you suspended from the ceiling and hanging over the centre of the carpet should be the letter 'G'. In some Lodges it will be hanging from the ceiling above the Worshipful Master's Chair. The letter 'G' should always be readable from the West. In the early days of Freemasonry the letter 'G' would have been drawn on the floor in the centre of the Lodge/Temple. The actual letter 'G' would have been in the centre of a diamond or a Sun hence the expression within the First Degree Tracing Board - the Blazing Star with the Glory in the centre. The letter 'G' stands for Glory, for Geometry the Fifth Science, for the Great Architect of the Universe, for the Grand Geometrician and for God. **The letter 'G' is one of the Ornaments of the Lodge.**

Exit from the North side and face East.

On your right by the door of the Lodge/Temple is the Inner Guards Chair. On his Chair the Inner Guard's Collar with the Jewel which is two Swords in Saltire.

Under his Chair or adjacent to his position –*For the First Degree* – One Poinyard.

Walk slowly down the North side of the Lodge/Temple to the East.

On your left the Secretary's table.

On your left - One Kneeling stool by the side of the Secretary's Table.

On the Secretary's table should be a:-

A Lectern; a Ballot Box; 2 x Boxes/Bags of Black and White Balls; 2 x Alms Bags.

Behind the Secretary's Table, the first Chair will have on it the Assistant Secretary's Collar with the Jewel which is two Pens in Saltire with the word Assistant.

The Second or middle Chair will have on it the Secretary's Collar with the Jewel which is two pens in Saltire.

The last or third Chair will have on it the Treasurers Collar with the Jewel which is a Key.

The Senior Deacon's Chair should be the last Chair you pass at the North East Corner. His Chair should face South; on his Chair his Collar with the Jewel which is a Dove bearing an Olive Branch.

In the Opening Ceremony the Senior Deacon when asked of his situation replies *At or near to the right of the Worshipful Master*. This is because in the early days of Freemasonry he actually sat directly on the right of the Worshipful Master, that position now being reserved for the Senior Grand Officer or District representative.

On the right of his Chair facing South his Wand set in its Holder with the Dove bearing an Olive Branch on his Wand facing South.

Walk to the door of the Lodge and outside at the Tyler's position –

On his Chair should be his Collar with the Jewel which is a single Sword. Laid on his Chair will be laid his Sword of Office.

He should also have available:-

For the First Degree - A Cable Tow; a Hood Wink; a right Slip Shod Shoe; b lackTape and Plasters, to cover any un-removable rings etc.

On his desk should be the Attendance Book and a Pen. The Attendance Book is very important and is the subject of a short Presentation but suffice it to say that it provides a record of Subscribing Brethren, Visitors together with their own Lodge details and their Sponsor. The details therein are used by the Secretary for the Minute Book and in the event of a fire or an emergency the details will become a Muster List.

With all the Furniture, Ornaments and Jewels in position the Lodge Room / Temple can now be said to be - 'Just, Perfect and Regular'.

*Worshipful.Brother David O.V.Hubbard MBE, DistGDC
September 2013*