



LODGE OF LIVING STONES No 4957

Castle Grove Masonic Hall, Moor Road, Headingley, Leeds, LS6 4BP, United Kingdom

Associates Secretary

Robert Lomas
robert@openlodge.com
Masonic Hall
Castle Grove
Headingley
Leeds
LS6 4BP
Masonic Hall

Lodge Secretary

David Grant
d.grant1@virginmedia.com
Masonic Hall
Castle Grove
Headingley
Leeds
LS6 4BP

December 2015

Dear Brethren,

ALL THE WORKING TOOLS OF A MASTER MASON.

The most important thing to understand about Freemasonry is that the purpose of the Craft is to facilitate your personal quest to build your character, and personality, and so develop your soul, (or as I, being physicist, prefer to call it your divine inner spark of self awareness that enables you to collapse Schrödinger wave functions and so create reality). You are the sum total of your thoughts and actions. Freemasonry helps you act and think in such a way as to improve yourself.

It does this using the metaphor of building a temple, loosely based on the various historic structures which were built to house the Ark of the Covenant beginning with the First, or Holy Lodge opened in the desert shade of the Tabernacle by Moses, Aholiab and Bazaleel, down to the Third, or Grand and Royal Lodge opened by Zerubbabel, Haggai and Joshua, during the reconstruction of the Temple following the Babylonian captivity. The main focus of the three degrees of the Craft is the Second, or Sacred Lodge opened by Solomon, king of Israel, Hiram, king of Tyre, and Hiram Abif, the widow's son, during the building of the First Temple on the threshing floor of Araunah. This was the site where Abraham had originally offered his son Isaac as a human sacrifice only to have the offer rejected in favour of a ram. The ritual of the three degrees of the craft, along with the additional workings of the board of Installed Masters, focusses on the methods and difficulties of building and consecrating this structure to the highest standards of building perfection. The ritual employs this myth to assist a Master Mason to understand the problems of building his own character to the highest possible state of perfection he can attain.

To help in the task various tools are provided and they are intended to be used to plan and implement the project to construct and consecrate your structure to the service of Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth.

Once you are raised to the sublime degree of a master mason you have access to all the working tools of Craftsman, (although installed masters are given a further three to assist in the management of the workforce). The nine Master Mason's tools are:

- The 24 inch gauge
- The Common Gavel
- The Chisel
- The Plumb-rule
- The Level
- The Square
- The Compasses
- The Pencil
- The Skirret

They group into four main classes which are spread over the three degrees. These are:

Tools of Physical Intervention

The Common Gavel and the Chisel

(These tools symbolise the force of Conscience and the power of Education)

Tools of Testing and Quality Assurance

The Square, the Plumb Rule, the Level and the Compasses.

(These tools symbolise your sense of Morality, your sense of Justice, your sense of Equality and your sense of the boundary between good and evil)

Tools of Planning and Measurement

The 24 inch gauge and the Skirret

(These tools symbolise your ability measure the materials needed for the construction and also to manage the duration it will take to build the structure within a reasonable time-frame and your ability to construct a perimeter which clearly defines a centre, being the point where your divine spark of awareness will be found.)

Tools of Thinking, Planning and Communication

The pencil.

(This symbolises your ability to record, to plan, to organise your resources, and to communicate your plan to the workforce so that that they work together in harmony to complete the intended structure.)

Freemasonry gives you these tools so you can project manage the building of your own personality, and character. King Solomon's Temple is a metaphor for this soul-building. You are the building, and you create yourself using the mental tools which are analogous to the building tools our ancient brethren used to build King Solomon's Temple. But the tools are not presented to you in the order in which you will need to employ them to create an edifice of which you can be duly proud. Freemasonry is not in the business of proscribing a course of action. It gives you a worthy objective, a model of good practice, a set of versatile tools and a group of companions to encourage you. It then tells you to think for yourself and get on with the job.

To help with this lifelong task I have found it useful to extend the metaphors of fifteenth century stone workers to encompass modern thoughts on the management of building projects and this paper contains my ideas on using this extended Masonic metaphor of soul-enrichment.

I will begin by considering the steps needed to create this new building which you hope to build as a superstructure, perfect in all its parts, and honourable to the builder.

First: you must conceive the purpose of the building.

Second: you must outline the structure, its components and its site, to draw up a plan.

Third: you must assemble the work force and the raw materials you need.

Fourth: you must create the component parts and check they meet the requirements of the plan.

Fifth: you must organise the construction process and check the quality of construction.

Only when all these steps have been completed is the building ready to be consecrated to its original purpose. I will now consider each step in turn.

Step 1: Understand the Purpose of the Building

Major Tool used: The pencil

When you joined Freemasonry you were asked to name the predominant wish of your heart. You gave the ritual answer - light. This light is the faint glow of knowledge which you sense before you in the east and which you hope will develop from the faint ray of the bright morning star to the searing intensity of a rising sun.

The purpose of your building is to erect a structure fit to house all the complexity of your humanity within a space which can contain your emotions, your intellect, your spiritual aspirations and that immortal essence of consciousness that makes you human.

You try to build it on the sacred threshing ground of Masonic tradition which is considered holy for three ritual reasons. These are:

First, the ready compliance of Abraham with the will of Great Architect in not refusing to offer up his son Isaac as a burnt sacrifice, when it pleased the Most High to substitute a more agreeable victim in his stead. (This symbolises your need to build your character upon a grounding of trust so to help you learn and understand about yourself.)

Secondly, the many pious prayers and ejaculations of King David, which stayed a pestilence which then raged among his people, owing to him having them inadvertently numbered. (This teaches that you must be prepared to acknowledge and make recompense for your previous mistakes so you can start from a firm foundation.)

And thirdly, the many thanksgivings, oblations, burnt sacrifices and costly offerings which Solomon, King of Israel, made at the completion, dedication, and consecration of the Temple at Jerusalem to the service of the Most High. (This shows that if you persevere you will eventually achieve the completion of your building when you will be ready to open its dormer to the light of knowledge from the centre and to receive the accolade of your peers at its successful completion. This is signified in ritual myth, and musical allegory, as the arrival of the Queen of Sheba who hearing of the wonderful temple King Solomon had built was not content to simply send an ambassador to represent her but travelled in person with a great retinue to Jerusalem, to view the glories of the building and offer to Solomon many costly gifts to adorn it.)

Having determined that your building will stand on Holy ground you must next define the extent of your own holy ground. (Mine is firmly founded in a deep seated belief in the Laws of Physics and the importance of consciousness in creating the great scheme of the cosmos). Next you must survey your site so as to align it along the line of the first rays of the rising sun on the vernal equinox, the moment when dark and light come into perfect balance. You will need to mark the line of shadow of the deacon's wand on the pre-prepared ground to align your foundation stone at the north east corner of the cleared site.

Symbolically the form of your temple will need to be a parallelepipedon, in length from East to West, in breadth between North and South, in depth from the surface of the earth to the centre, and as high as the Heavens. (This symbolises the universal extent of the Masonic knowledge you intend to house within the finished temple of yourself.)

The tools required for the creation of this objective are your pencil, your mind and your awareness of Truth.

Your awareness of the existence of Truth inspires you, your mind translates this awareness into actions and your pencil records the steps you need to take to prepare a plan to complete a temple dedicated to the three great principles of Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth.

Step 2: Outline the structure, its Components, and draw up a Plan to fit it on the Site.

Major Tools used: The 24 inch gauge, the Skirret and the Pencil

At the centre of your building you will need to make space to house a special symbol in the roof of its middle chamber. This is the letter G situated in the centre of a blazing star, and denotes the divine spark of your conscious intelligence whose self-awareness make you part of the purpose of the universe. You can plan the extent of the middle chamber using the skirret and by noting the position of the centre pin you can mark the site where the divine spark will reside, once you have completed a building fit to house it.

The scope and extent of the stories of the building, the layout of the spiral stairways and shape and size of the necessary component ashlar must all be added to your plan using the pencil, which records and communicates ideas and the skirret which plots circumferences and spirals, in conjunction with 24 inch gauge which measures the dimension of the stones which must be shaped in the quarry before being assembled at the building site in accordance with the plan you have prepared.

It is important that the stones are squared, dressed or otherwise shaped, soon after they are extracted from the quarry whilst the stone is fresh from the earth and suffused with the quarry sap that makes them easy to work. Once shaped the stones must be seasoned by exposing them to the open air to dry the quarry sap and harden the form. When formed, the stone will be difficult to work so whilst making your plan take account of the need to establish a steady rate of progress, using the time measure aspect of the 24 inch gauge. You should learn from the practice of our ancient brethren under the guidance of Hiram Abif who decreed that the stones should be hewn in the quarry, there squared, carved, marked, and numbered according the plan, whilst still fresh. After due seasoning your stones should be conveyed to your Jerusalem, and set up with wooden mauls and implements prepared for that purpose. You should emulate the excellence of the Craft in those days, so that your materials, even though they are prepared at a great a distance, when they are brought to your temple come together so that each piece fits to such exact nicety, that it appears more like the work of the Great Architect of the Universe than that of human hands. The 24 four inch gauge, which also symbolises the 24 hours of the day, reminds us that all necessary work must be done at the correct time. The shaping and dressing must not be delayed, the seasoning must not be rushed and the numbered ashlar must be shipped to the building site in the order they are needed to fulfil your plan. You have little spare storage space so the competent parts must arrive just in time, neither too late (so delaying the work), out of sequence (so requiring a search for the missing parts) or too quickly (thus cluttering up the building site and making the work more difficult).

Step 3: Assemble your Work Force and locate the Raw Materials you need.

Major Tool used: The Pencil.

As a Master Mason you have already been introduced to the four components of your being which constitute your available work force.

In the first degree you faced your emotions, which imbue you with fears and hopes. You learned to control and subdue your fears and improper urges, and focus your hopes and inspiration on your search for Truth.

In the second degree you developed your mind and intellect. You studied the hidden mysteries of nature and science that you might better understand the mystery of being and learn to face and recognise Truth. You were taught the way to climb the spiral stairway towards the Centre.

In the third degree you learned how to free your spirit from the tyranny of your ego and let it spiral upwards towards the light of the sacred symbol at your centre.

Now as you muster your resources to labour in the quarry, and on the building site, you must also harness the insight of your soul which recognises its oneness with the divine spark that motivates the implementation of your plan.

Having listed with your pencil the disposition of your workforce you must next think about which quarries they can mine for the rough ashlar of your building. These quarries are traditionally known as the seven liberal arts and sciences which are. Grammar, Rhetoric, Logic, Arithmetic, Geometry, Music and Astronomy.

Each offers different types of stone to adorn the various chambers of your building. Freemasonry encourages you to mine these quarries of accumulated human knowledge and to use the rough nuggets you extract to create the smooth ashlar your plan requires.

Once again your pencil comes to your aid to help you organise your thoughts and take notes about your growing knowledge of yourself as you learn to speak clearly and with feeling, express your thoughts logically, account for your actions, appreciate the eternal truths of geometry, imbibe the sweet joy of music and appreciate the wonderful majesty of the heavens.

Step 4: Create the Component Parts and Check they Fit the Plan.

Major Tools used: The Common Gavel, the Chisel, the Square, and the Compasses

The method of squaring and shaping a rough ashlar is painstakingly slow. You need to learn caution, remember to measure and check before you apply the hammer. Once the chisel bites into the stone it is changed forever. You must trust the plan and constantly refer your evolving work to the blueprint, to check it is correctly shaped.

The key to success at this stage is developing craftsmanship, taking pride in your work and appreciating that each stone in the plan, no matter how small, or how apparently oddly shaped, is needed and vital to complete the structure. It means working to deadlines, delivering high quality finished stones on time and systematically selecting best available raw material. The importance of the use of the chisel cannot be over emphasised at this stage. Stones are not shaped by emotion or good intentions. Without the sharp cutting edge of a highly honed education you cannot hope to cut the stone cleanly and beautifully. If you think the cost of training and education is too expensive to consider, then think for a moment of the much higher cost and consequences of

ignorance. It is better to apply skill and knowledge in small cutting steps, than to wreck the stone by ill-considered, uneducated, random blows which crack and destroy it.

Step 5: Organise the Construction Process and Check the Quality of Construction.

Major Tools used: The Common Gavel, the Plumb Rule, the Level and the Compasses

You must appoint trusted overseers, as part of your internal workforce, to second-check your efforts and reject any stones which are not up to standard or which do not fit the plan.

Your plan relies on a correctly shaped stone arriving at the building site at the exact moment it is needed to further the construction of the building so that you can use a Master's trowel to set it in place using the mortar of Brotherly Love. As you build you will start by checking the levelness of the site, you will align the corner stone using the light of the rising sun on the day of balance. As you set each stone in place you will check its alignment with the level and the plumb rule, adjust it if necessary with gentle taps from the gavel of conscience and measure its relative position to its fellows using the compasses to check you are doing what is right. As the building progress you will require a plumb line of Moral Rectitude and Truth to make sure your walls are upright and worthy.

When the building is complete you are ready to dedicate it by calling down the glory of the Shekinah into the middle chamber ensuring that the light of knowledge may permanently dwell at your centre.

Summary

Freemasonry is a progressive science. You begin by having Freemasonry done to you. During this process you are given the tools and shown the nature of the intended structure. Next you do Freemasonry to others, and as you progress through the offices of the lodge you learn more about the construction process, the use of the tools and get hints about the nature of the overall plan. This knowledge is consolidated in the office of master of the lodge, where you take on the role of overseer, are given the appropriate tools of work force management and learn how to quality assure your final structure by presenting yourself as a just, upright and impartial role model, to prepare your completed temple to be humbly consecrated by the light of Truth and Brotherly Love.

Finally as you take up the contemplative and supportive office of IPM you can reflect on what you have learned and begin to inhabit the soul-structure you have created for yourself.

Yours sincerely and fraternally,
Bro Robert Lomas
Secretary for Associate Members