

Current Status of the Degree

Mark Grand Lodge can now claim some 51,000 members in this country and its districts overseas. This Degree is the third largest in membership after Craft and Chapter. The Grand Master of Mark Master Masons is M.W.Bro. HRH Prince Michael of Kent.

The Mark Province of Wiltshire was formed in 1892, when the Provincial Grand Master was William, 5th Earl of Radnor, the Provincial Grand Master in the Craft . At the present time there are over 400 individual members of the Mark Degree in the Province in 13 Lodges, one meets in the morning and another is a Past Master's Lodge. They are spread throughout the county.

Eligibility

All Brethren who have been raised to the Degree of Master Mason are eligible to be Advanced into Mark Masonry. Progress through the various offices in a Mark Lodge is similar to that of a Craft Lodge.

However, there is no requirement to have attained the chair in the Craft before becoming Worshipful Master in a Mark Lodge.

Further Information on the Degree

More information on the Mark Degree in Wiltshire, including a list of Lodges, can be obtained by visiting our web-site at: www.mmmwilts.org.uk

Contact us

If you are interested in joining either contact a Brother you know to be a Mark Mason or contact the Provincial Grand Secretary whose details are in the Provincial Year Book

Last but by no means least.....

Mark Masonry is known universally as "**The Friendly Degree**". It certainly lives up to its name from the moment you are welcomed as a member and then go on to enjoy the happiness and friendship the Degree brings.



Your experience in the Craft will have given you some knowledge regarding the building of King Solomon's Temple. But have you considered how it was built and what problems may have been encountered during construction?

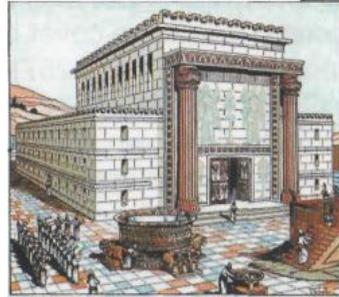
Who, for instance, carried out the Quality Assurance and how? These are some of the questions addressed in the ceremony of Advancement into the Degree of a Mark Master Mason



Background

Whilst the origins of Freemasonry are uncertain, most historians believe they arose from the working practices of operative stone masons. The fact that **marks** are found on stones forming part of some of the most ancient and beautiful structures suggest that the craftsmen who prepared them wanted their work recognized so that they could be identified and rewarded for their efforts.

The Holy Bible contains a detailed account of the building of a Temple in Jerusalem around 1,000 BC by Solomon, King of Israel. The stories and legends surrounding the planning, preparation and building of this Temple, and its rebuilding several centuries later form the basis of Freemasonry.



In olden times stones hewn from quarries would



have been useless for the building until they were properly prepared and dressed by highly skilled masons using mauls and chisels. It became customary for these stone masons to place marks upon the stones they had prepared so that their work would be recognised as fit for purpose and for the payment of wages for their efforts. Additional marks were sometimes put on the stones to indicate their position in the structure. Masons' marks have been found on

stones used in Ancient Egypt and the Middle East including castles and churches and in the cathedrals of Europe built from the middle ages onwards. They are found, not only on stones used as ordinary building blocks, but also on stones used for decoration.



Some Marks found in Salisbury Cathedral

The late Brother Roy Spring, Clerk of Works to Salisbury Cathedral and a member of Elias de Derham Mark Lodge recorded the Masons Marks found in the Cathedral.

Origins of the Mark Degree



The first written reference to the Mark Degree in England can be found recorded inside the cover of the first Minute Book of the Chapter of Friendship No.3 (now 257) dated 1769 when Thomas Dunckerley made six Chapter members 'Mark Masons' and 'Mark Masters' and asked them to choose their own marks. The Chapter of Friendship continued to work the Mark Degree until 1855. Mark Grand Lodge was formed in June 1856 and the Companions of the Chapter who had taken the Mark Degree gave allegiance to the new body.

From these humble beginnings the Phoenix Lodge of Mark Masters No. 2 (Time Immemorial) traces its origins. This Lodge still meets at Old Portsmouth and is recognised as the oldest Mark Lodge still working in the world. Phoenix Lodge was one of the five founding Lodges when Mark Grand Lodge was formed in 1856.

The Mark Degree itself

The Mark Degree is one of hope and encouragement and the ritual is built upon a single verse of Psalm 118: "The stone which the builders rejected has become the headstone of the corner".

The Ceremony of Advancement into the Mark Degree is based on the on-going work of building King Solomon's Temple following the death of Hiram Abif. It traces the fate of an ambitious craftsman (represented by the candidate) seeking advancement in his profession by demonstrating his skill and ability. In the early part of the Ceremony his talents are not recognised and his efforts go unrewarded. Eventually however his work is appreciated and he is justly praised and recompensed for his accomplishments. It is a wonderful ceremony containing elements of drama and humour, and above all, strong moral lessons. The concept of Masons as "living stones" being built into a spiritual house, in concert with the construction of the Temple, is a powerful theme in the Degree.

