



# Nugget

## Immovable Jewels

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### **Summary**

The Immovable Jewels of the Lodge: The Tracing Board and Rough and Smooth Ashlars.

### **Keywords**

First-Degree, Tracing-Board, Rough, Smooth, Ashlar

## The Immovable Jewels

There are three immovable jewels in Freemasonry, all of which are on display whenever a Lodge is open. They are the Tracing Board, and the Rough and Smooth Ashlars.

We are told the tracing board is for the Master to lay lines and draw designs on. This refers back to the days of the operative mason, when the Master Mason would show the work required of his men. Now it has become stylised and there is one for each degree. Jointly they might be considered as a syllabus for Freemasonry, although coded through symbolism and allegory.

Then we have the Rough and Smooth Ashlars. An ashlar is a square hewn stone intended for building purposes. It is not necessarily in the form of a cube, with all sides and faces equal, although that is how we most often see it represented in our lodges.

So the stone is hewn out in the quarry and passed to the Entered Apprentice to work, mark and indent on. To do this he would have used his working tools, being a rule, gavel and chisel. His duty is to prepare it for the hands of the more expert workman. In operative masonry the craftsman would be responsible for perfecting the stone for its intended purpose. But as we are not all operative masons, but rather free and accepted or speculative, we draw different lessons from these jewels.

In this sense, the rough ashlar is said to represent man at the start of life, when he has his natural wits, but no learning. His parents or guardians are then responsible for educating him so that he becomes a fit member of civilised society.

The perfect ashlar represents the ultimate product of this effort. It is a stone of true die or square, fit only to be tried by the Square and Compasses. It represents a form of perfection that might be achieved by a good man in his later years, after a life in which has demonstrated virtuous and pious behaviour, when his character is fit to be tried by the Square of the Grand Architect of the Universe's Word and the Compasses of his own self-convincing conscience.

The perfect ashlar is often displayed in conjunction with a tripod, being held by a cord and pulley system and attached through a lewis or cramp. The tripod is the one mechanical device displayed in a lodge. It is there to help the workman raise the now perfected stone, so that it fits into its intended place in the structure.

The lewis is made of pieces of metal being dovetailed into the stone, thereby forming a cramp and giving a handle to which the pulley ropes can be attached. It represents the son of a Mason and should remind us of the duties owed by a son to his aged parents, as represented by the perfection of the ashlar.

The immovable jewels therefore teach us about our progress through the degrees of Freemasonry as well as through the design of life, as we pass from the inexperience of youth to the wisdom of age.

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##END##

## Recommended use of Nuggets

Nuggets offer a short, simple and readily absorbed means of progressing Masonic knowledge and an easy way to introduce learning to Lodges and Chapters. It is hoped that they will become a regular feature of Lodge and Chapter meetings as well as a source for private-study.

Nuggets can be included as an item in the summons and read at most Lodge/Chapter meetings. They can be:

- Read by either a new or an experienced Mason with the minimum of preparation and practice; *though ideally, they need to be read a few times beforehand.*
- Themed with the meeting or activity.
- Used to initiate a discussion within a Lodge/Chapter, LOI/COI, or group.
- Read at home and shared as a topic for a future discussion.
- Used as a focus for an unplanned, informal discussion.

**For further nuggets and other learning materials visit 'Solomon' at <http://solomon.ugle.org.uk>**

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