



Paper

A walk around your Lodge Room

Index

A Journey around the Lodge Room.

Summary

A Journey around the Lodge room, explaining the furniture, fittings and jewels, and the symbolism behind them. It is an extract from '*I just didn't know that*', a book by Revd. Neville Barker-Cryer, published by Lewis Masonic.

Keywords

First-Degree, Lodge, Furniture, Fittings, Jewels.

A walk around your Lodge Room

Principal Officers' Pedestals and Chairs

We begin our journey around the Lodge Room by explaining why the Principal Officers sit where they do. Some of you may be surprised to learn that the positions they occupy today are not those they would have occupied in an Operative Masons' Lodge. Early Masonic ritual specified that the Master of the Lodge should sit at the apex of a triangle formed by the three Principal Officers. This meant that he either sat at the corner of the Square or that the Senior and Junior Wardens sat in the two farthest corners of the space in front of him, thus representing the positions formed by a pair of Compasses. Moreover, many Lodges held meetings with the Brethren sat around a large rectangular table, which symbolised King Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem, and in these Lodges, the Master sat next to the Junior Warden at the Left-hand end of the table and the Senior Warden sat in the middle of the front long side (i.e. the Master sat in the West and the Wardens in the North and East). An alternative was to use a 'T'-shaped table, with the Master and Past Masters sitting at the 'horizontal' 'top' table, with the two Wardens opposite each other and the far end of the 'vertical' table (i.e. with the Master in the North and the Wardens in the North-East and South-East).

The ritual we use today still bears traces of these seating arrangements. For example, when the Worshipful Master asks the Junior Warden why he is placed where he is, he replies: *'to mark the sun at its meridian'*, which he would be able to do from the North or the North-East. Similarly, the Senior Warden can mark *'the setting sun'* from the East or South-East. Indeed, in two Lodges the phrase 'to mark or see the rising (or setting) sun' is used.

All this was altered when the Premier Grand Lodge created its new rules and ritual after 1717. The Master was now expected to sit in the East: *'...since all Churches and places of Worship are so orientated'*, though he actually faces West in his chair, rather than East like a priest before an altar in a church.

As the number of Past Masters grew, they spread out either side of the Master in the Lodge, with the Secretary and the Treasurer sitting at the end of the 'top' table (i.e. in the North and South). In some Lodges in the West and North of England, these officers still sit in these positions. When the Master was moved from the floor to the East, the Junior Warden remained in the same position.

After the creation of the United Grand Lodge of England in 1813, more changes were made to these seating positions. The Master remained in the East, with the Wardens in the West and South, but they reverted to the old 'Compasses' positions mentioned above at Festive Boards and other non-procedural meetings. The other major change was the banning of the habit of eating and drinking at the same table as the one at which Lodge meetings were held. This took a while to be observed. The Minutes of Ludlow Lodge in 1852 record: *'A large bowl of punch was carried into the Lodge Room after the Ceremony of Installing the New Master'. The Lodge was subsequently reprimanded by its Provincial Grand Master, who instructed the Master to: 'call the Lodge Off and retire...to another room...for tea'!*

Following the removal of tables from Lodges after 1813, the Principal Officers, Secretary and Treasurer still needed somewhere to place their gavels, papers etc., so pedestals were introduced. The Worshipful Master's pedestal also became the place where the Volume of the Sacred Law was displayed.

The Pillars and Globes

These represent the two large pillars topped with bowls at the entrance to King Solomon's Temple. Initially, they were simply drawn on the floor of the Lodge, next to, or underneath the table. When Lodges began to have permanent Lodge Rooms, replica pillars and bowls were placed at the West end of the floor, as you can still see in Lodges in Bristol, Barnstaple and York. Some Lodges found they got in the way of the ritual, so they were moved. In a Lodge in Hartlepool they were moved to the side, whereas in a Lodge in Halifax they were moved to either side of the door and in a Lodge in Warrington they were placed outside the entrance to the building. In nearly all other Lodges in England, they were reduced to the size of candlesticks and moved to the Wardens' pedestals and renamed 'columns'. (Note that the columns had originally been the name of the candlesticks. The Boaz Pillar was topped with a terrestrial globe and the Jachin Pillar with a celestial globe.

The globes lead us to a major anachronism. As everyone thought the Earth was flat at the time King Solomon's Temple was built, how could there have been two globes on the two pillars?

The answer is that the pillars in the Temple were topped with bowls, not globes. The bowls were filled with lamp oil which burned night and day, thus creating what the Bible describes as: *'a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night'*. If you go to the Masonic Lodges in Barnstaple or Bath today, you will see their pillars are topped with bowls. Yet the creators of our ritual were also hugely influenced by the Renaissance. Many of them were literate and had seen the illustrations of King Solomon's Temple in the *'Geneva Bible'* originally published in 1560 and its successors. They depict two pillars topped with globes covered with netting. This coincided with the fashion for displaying pairs of globes in gentlemen's studies, and so the terrestrial and celestial globes replaced the bowls in most Lodges.

The candlesticks

These were not originally placed on the Senior Officers' pedestals, but on the table in a triangle on top of the former floor cloth which evolved into the Tracing Board and then the Mosaic Pavement or Carpet in the centre of the ceremonial area. They were moved for the same reason as the pillars and the table: they impeded floor work during the ritual. Since they had originally used by the Principal Officers, they were moved to their pedestals. Note that it was the Masonic regalia manufacturers who changed their design to reflect the three Classical Orders of Architecture.

The Working Tools and Tracing Boards

In a few old Lodges in England (e.g. Lewes and Taunton) you can still see today Lodge floors with an array of items displayed on them, including the Ark of the Covenant, the Two Tablets of the Ten Commandments; a pot of incense; the Master's Tile; the Tripod and Pulley; the two Globes and the Working Tools of the Degree being worked.

This is because of the process of transitioning from drawings of the Working Tools on the floor, to paintings of them on a cloth, to paintings of them on the Tracing Boards, to the use of the actual objects. Some Lodges decided to keep them on display on the floor where the Tracing Boards had been, rather than tidying them away and only bringing them out as required. Incidentally, this is probably why, in many Lodges in Cheshire and the South of England, the Director of Ceremonies orders the Tracing Board to be placed in the centre of the floor for the duration of the ceremony. In other Lodges, it is placed at the West end of the carpet and in others it is displayed on one of the walls of the Lodge.

Squaring the Lodge Room

When Lodges met around tables, the Candidate was not allowed to walk over the drawings on the Lodge floor, so he would have been led around the outside of the table. He would have then arrived behind the seated Wardens and so he tapped them on the shoulder to tell them he was there. Although the Lodge Room layout has now changed, the 'shoulder-tapping' has survived in many Lodges.

Positions of other Lodge Officers

These vary a great deal. In some Lodges you will find the Director of Ceremonies and his Assistant sitting in the front row of seats on the North side, near to the Worshipful Master. In others, you will find the Senior Deacon sitting next to the Secretary, so that he can carry messages. In others, you will find the Assistant director of Ceremonies sitting to the left of the Senior Warden so that he can act as a guide for that end of the Lodge and so that he can handle latecomers.

The Inner Guard

The office of Inner Guard was created after the 1813 Union. Before then, a similar role was performed by the most recently initiated Entered Apprentice, who was armed with a trowel or a sword. This is referenced in our modern ritual in the First-Degree Charge: *'Monarchs themselves have not thought it derogatory to exchange the sceptre for the Trowel'*, meaning that even the most exalted in the land are not ashamed to descend from their positions to that lowest position in the Lodge.

The Wands of Office

The Worshipful Master once had a Wand of office, as a symbol of his duty to keep order in the Lodge. In a Lodge in Keighley, you can still see the clips on the Worshipful Master's pedestal for holding his Wand. In some Lodges, this duty was delegated to the Director of Ceremonies, and with it, the Wand. In many cases, the wand has been reduced to a conductor's baton.

In another case of following church practice, the Senior and Junior Wardens once also had Wands of Office like Churchwardens, but they were passed on to the Senior and Junior Deacons after the 1813 Union. Their original holders are still referenced in Lodges at Sunderland and Durham, where they are topped with symbols of a sun and crescent moon, for the Wardens who marked the passage of the sun and moon to call the Lodge to rest. Today, most Deacons' Wands are either tipped with representations of Hermes or Mercury, the messengers of the Ancient gods, in reference to the Deacons' duty of carrying messages, or with a dove bearing an olive branch, a reference to the bringer of good news to Noah's ark.

The Tracing Boards and Carpet

Today, nearly every Lodge in England has Tracing Boards on display and a carpet, but many Lodges in Ireland do not have Tracing Boards and many in Scotland do not have carpets. The Tracing Boards are the permanent successors to the temporary chalk and charcoal drawings on the Lodge floor made by the Tyler before each Lodge meeting and washed off with a mop and water afterwards. To improve clarity, some Lodges placed the actual objects on the floor, while others painted them on cloths that could be unrolled for each meeting and then rolled up for storage. The cloths were gradually replaced by canvas stretched over a frame or by Tracing Boards. Some (e.g. at Haworth) were black-and-white, but most were in colour. The designs of the Tracing Boards for each Degree became standardised during the nineteenth century. Of course, variations are still used. For example, Lodges at Cheltenham and Greenock use a single composite Tracing Board for all three Degrees. a lodge at York has all three Tracing Boards on permanent display and a Lodge in Derby has Tracing Boards depicting objects that are no longer explained.

The Carpet, also known as the Mosaic Pavement, has a distinctive black-and-white chequerboard design. The edges of the Carpet designate the limits of the Lodge floor. There are often tassels on each corner, a reference to the frayed ends of the chalked string on a Skirret used by Operative Masons to mark out the lines of a building on the ground. Some Lodges (e.g. Pickering) display the tassels in the corners of the ceiling instead. The black-and-white squares represent light and darkness, and, by extension the good and bad things that will happen to us in our lives, from which Freemasonry will help us to draw strength and self-knowledge.

##END##

Recommended use of Papers

Papers offer a simple, direct means of advancement in a particular aspect of Masonic knowledge. They can be used in a variety of ways:

- Read at home for private study
- Shared for pre-reading by members of a discussion group
- Read aloud in Lodge or Chapter, or in an LOI/COI/new members forum
 - Followed by 'any questions'
 - As a precursor to a discussion (*in which case much more time is needed, possibly more than double that allocated to the paper itself*)
 - Supported by audio-visual aids, if necessary.

They can be delivered by a single person or split into bite-sized pieces and read by multiple presenters (*in which case, the speaker(s) should have read and practiced the delivery of the paper beforehand*).

If the paper is to be used to introduce a discussion, the presenter will need to have thought about the material, done a little research, and prepared some open questions to engage with the audience. Kipling's dictum can be of help in preparing open questions, which should begin with one of his 'serving men', as follows: *'I keep six honest serving men (they taught me all I knew). Their names are, What and Why and When and How and Where and Who'.*

Rudyard Kipling

If used as part of an event, the paper should be advertised and promoted by way of trailers, flyers and announcements, in summonses, letters, emails, notice boards, and on social media.

For further papers and other learning materials visit "Solomon" at <http://solomon.ugle.org.uk>

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