

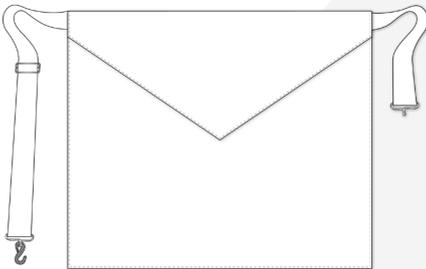


# PAPER

## The Apron

**Summary:** A short talk describing the history, symbolism and meaning behind the Masonic Apron.

*'It is more ancient than the Golden Fleece or Roman Eagle, more honourable than the Garter or any other Order in existence, being the badge of innocence and the bond of friendship.'*



In these few words, Freemasonry expresses the honour that it pays to this symbol of The Ancient Craft.

*The Order of the Golden Fleece* was founded by Philip, Duke of Burgundy in 1429. In 1477 it was passed to the House of Hapsburg and has been continued under the Spanish branch of the family to the present day.

The Roman Eagle dates back to 100 BCE and was Rome's symbol of power and ensign of might. In Roman mythology, the Eagle is associated with the God Jupiter. Many years later the Prophet Mohammed, the founder of Islam, adopted the Roman Eagle for need of a flag to muster his troops.

*The Order of the Garter*, arguably the world's foremost Order of Chivalry, was founded in 1349 by King Edward III of England, for himself and twenty-five Knights of the Garter. To this day the recipients are chosen personally by The Sovereign. Hence to the Freemason the statement that the Apron is more honourable than the Garter when it represents to a Brother all that it teaches is exemplified in the life and behaviour of the wearer.

Essentially, the Masonic Apron is the badge of honourable labour. The right to wear it is given only to tried and tested men. The claim that the Masonic Apron is more ancient than these is a provable fact. To declare that it is more honourable, the premise 'when worthily worn' is implied. Let us, therefore, put the use of the apron into an historical perspective.

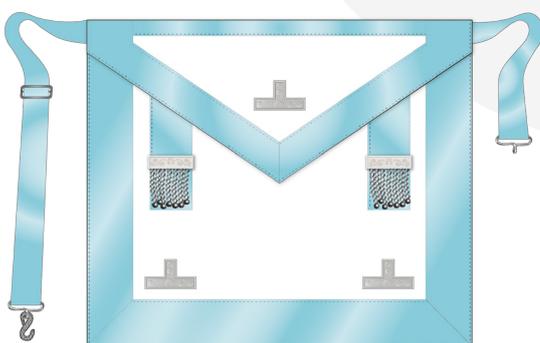
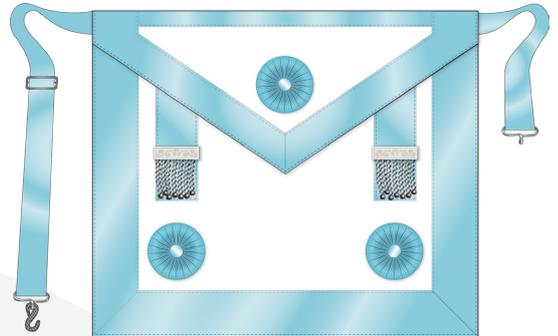
The wearing of an apron is very old indeed, far older than as a garment to protect the clothing of the operative craftsman, or to provide him with a convenient receptacle in which to keep his tools. The Arch Druid clothed himself in a white apron as far back as 75 BCE when he cut the most sacred Mistletoe; a symbol equivalent to our Acacia.

In the Far East the Japanese used aprons in their Religious Worship called Shinto that dates to the first Millennium BCE. Candidates for the mysteries of Mithras, a Persian secret society which existed before the birth of Christ, were invested with aprons.

The girdle or apron, known as the Jewish Ephod, is an ornate vestment suspended from the shoulders and worn by The High Priest upon the Day of Atonement. It was part of his sacrificial protection and dates back more than 3000 years. The apron is described in the Bible as a girdle. Elijah and also John the Baptist wore girdles made of leather; Isaiah worn one of hair cloth; and Jeremiah wore one of linen.

In a word, though the principal honour of the apron may consist in its reference to innocence of conduct and purity of heart, yet it certainly appears through all the ages to have been a most exalted badge of distinction.

- The Master Mason's Apron, like those of the previous degrees, is made of lambskin, which is the emblem of purity and the bond of friendship. It is adorned with blue in allusion to the royal splendour which King Solomon bestowed upon the Craft.
- The triangular flap is in allusion to the Forty Seventh Problem of Euclid, and the triangle being the earliest symbol of the Deity.
- The combination of the four corners and three rosettes add up to the ancient and most perfect and sacred number seven.
- The two ribbons are to remind the Master Mason that he has passed between the two great pillars of King Solomon's Temple, and is in possession of the password of a Master Mason. Some say it represents the two Saints John.
- The enrichment of the silver or gold tassels (again the sacred number seven) remind us of the Master Mason's password (T.... C...) who was the first artificer in metals, including gold and silver.
- The seven strands of a tassel refer to seven officers who make the Lodge perfect.
- Three Rosettes refer to the three degrees and to remind the Brother that three rule the Lodge, Five points (Four at each corner of the apron plus the tip of the flap) hold a Lodge.
- These Five Points also remind us of the Five-Points-of-Fellowship.
- The triangular position of the rosettes is a reminder of the equal positions of the Three Grand Masters: Solomon King of Israel, Hiram King of Tyre and Hiram Abiff. (Represented in Lodge by The Worshipful Master and his Wardens having positions separate and distinct from one another).



Past Masters of the English Constitution have a different apron. Instead of rosettes there are three sets of levels placed in the same position. These are deposed in perpendicular lines upon horizontal lines, thereby forming two sets of right-angles. Together and in combination these represent the component parts of the Mysterious Triple Tau.

The lambskin apron presented to the Initiate during his Entered Apprentice Degree should be for all his life a very precious possession. The outward and visible symbol of an inward and spiritual tie. This treasured symbol kept safely against the day when at long last the members of his Lodge can do no more for their Brother but lay him away under its protecting and comforting folds. Truly he has been a real Mason in the best sense of that great word, who has worn his lambskin apron during his manhood with pleasure to himself and honour to the Fraternity.

## 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).

\*Note: All biblical passages are taken from the Authorized King James version unless otherwise specified.

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.

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