

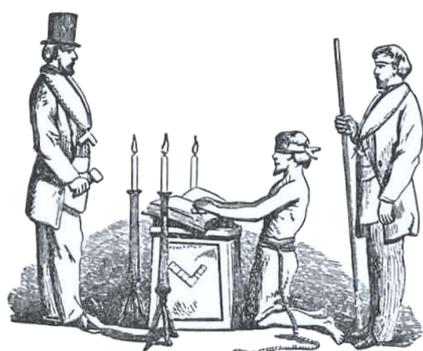


## AN INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND DEGREE

Congratulations on being Passed to the Degree of a Fellowcraft Freemason, having now taken part in a second ceremony, you are now midway in Freemasonry. As you know, at your Initiation you were taught your duties to God and your fellow creatures. You are now asked to extend your thoughts and reflections to the hidden mysteries of nature and science and contemplate on the Universe and your place within it.

As are looking at this short introductory paper we assume that you are already registered on Solomon and enrolled on the Second Degree module. However, if you are a new or recent Fellowcraft, you can also enrol on the Fellowcraft Course. This is a guided interactive experience supported by webinars and discussions, to which you will be invited. It is an invaluable opportunity to reflect on your experiences thus far, and discuss them with other brethren.

### The Second Degree Ceremony



At the start, as you were already a Freemason, you were entitled to be in the Lodge. Though before you progressed through the Ceremony you had to prove yourself by answering some questions about the First Degree.

You were not blindfolded and the signs and steps demonstrated to you were different, indicating your progress in the Craft.

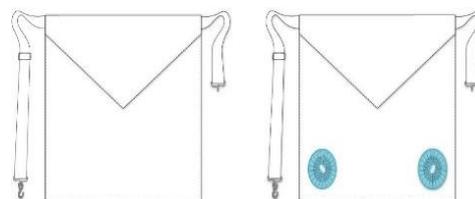
After you had taken your obligation you were given another apron, one still made of lambskin, but this time with two blue rosettes on it to indicate your progress and indication the Second Degree.

You symbolically climbed the winding staircase to the middle chamber. This denotes the need for courage and above all, faith. For the very fact that the staircase is winding, means that we do not know what lies before us. An allegory for our lives outside of the Lodge room.

The First Degree symbolically dealt with birth of the man and of knowledge, including knowledge of the self. In the Second Degree, the focus is your journey through life and the development of the self with new-found knowledge and increasing wisdom. It is in this degree that you are invited to consider your life and actions.

### The Apron

It was probably introduced in about 1720 and derived from the working apron of the Stonemason. It protected the clothing of skilled craftsmen, and became a badge of their trade. Historically, it was made of a whole lambskin, with the skin remnants of the legs used to tie the apron in place. The apron of the Speculative Mason was halved in length by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and that is what we wear today.



Your Fellowcraft apron is embellished with two pale blue rosettes. Linked to the practice of turning up the left bottom corner of the apron to signify that a Mason was a Fellowcraft, and then both corners, once he had progressed to 'Master Mason'. He then had a ready-made pocket for his essential tools, hence the two buttons.



Most aprons will have a blue border (a colour normally associated with the Craft) but some will have a red border; these are worn by Grand Stewards and Provincial Grand Stewards. Grand Stewards were first appointed in 1723 to arrange the Annual Festival of Grand Lodge.

## The Working Tools



The Square, Level & Plumb Rule have been the basic tools of construction work through the ages. In our Lodge Temples they have been used symbolically to represent the Worshipful Master and the Senior and Junior Wardens.

It is no coincidence that they are also the working tools of this degree making us reflect on morality, equality and uprightness of life and actions both within the Lodge and in the wider world:

*'The Square teaches us to regulate our lives and actions according to the Masonic line and rule, and to harmonise our conduct in this life so as to render us acceptable to that Divine Being from whom all goodness springs, and to whom we must give an account of all our actions.'*

*'The Level demonstrates that we are all sprung from the same stock, partakers of the same nature, and sharers in the same hope...yet ought no eminence of situation make us forget that we are Brothers...'*

*'The infallible Plumb Rule which, like Jacob's ladder, connects heaven and earth, is the criterion of rectitude and truth. It teaches us to walk justly and uprightly before God and man, neither turning to the right nor left from the paths of virtue...'*

Before the 18<sup>th</sup> century there were only two degrees in Craft Freemasonry, that of the Entered Apprentice and Fellowcraft or Fellow. In everyday life this derived from when operative masons acknowledged an apprentice who had served his time and was recognised as a craftsman entitled to practice his trade. Hence these important working tools were used in what was then the principal Degree of the Masonic Craft of the time.

## The Tracing Board



The explanation of the Second Degree Tracing Board is a long piece of ritual and demonstrates how Freemasonry uses various objects, drawings and stories to present moral lessons.

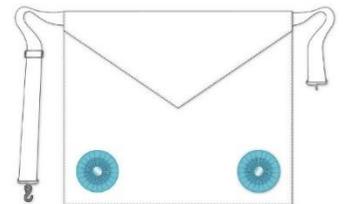
The explanation begins with the completion of King Solomon's Temple and draws particular attention to the two great pillars placed at the porchway or entrance, which represent strength and stability.

The second part of the explanation is about the building of the Temple. At initiation, you were placed in the Northeast corner to represent the foundation stone. The allegorical meaning of this is that the temple is not a physical building, but rather something within you.

Second Degree Tracing Board by John Harris 1825 - Museum of Freemasonry

## What next?

You have been given a few questions and answers which have to be learnt before you take part in your Third Degree (the Master Mason) to give proofs of proficiency in the Second Degree. It would be wise to involve your Mentor to give you confidence in your reply and to give you the opportunity to practice. It is not an exam. It is simply expected that you understand some of the Ceremony you have just taken part in.



UGLE gratefully acknowledges Mike Murton as the author of this document and for his permission to publish it in this form.