

The Immovable Jewels are the Tracing Board, and the Rough and Perfect Ashlars. In olden times the Tracing Board was for the Master to lay lines and draw designs on; the Rough Ashlar for the Entered Apprentice to work, mark and indent on; and the Perfect Ashlar for the experienced Craftsman to try, and adjust, his tools on. They are called Immovable Jewels because they lie open and immovable in the Lodge for all to see.

In all regular, well-formed Lodges there is a point within a circle round which Brethren cannot err. This circle is bounded between North and South by two grand, parallel lines, one representing Moses, and the other King Solomon. On the upper part of this circle rests the Volume of the Sacred Law. In going round this circle we must necessarily touch on both those parallel lines, likewise on the Volume of the Sacred Law; and while a Mason keeps himself thus circumscribed, he cannot err.

The word 'Lewis' denotes strength, and is depicted here by certain pieces of metal dovetailed into a stone, forming a cramp, which enables an operative Mason to raise great weights to certain heights with little effort. Lewis also denotes the son of a Mason; his duty to his aged parents is to bear the heat and burden of the day, which they, by reason of their age, ought to be exempt from, and to assist them in time of need. His privilege for so doing is that of being made a Mason before any other person, however, dignified.

The four tassels on the carpet are meant to remind us of the four cardinal virtues, namely: Temperance, Fortitude, Prudence and Justice, the whole of which were practiced by a great majority of our ancient Brethren. The distinguishing characteristics of a good Freemason are Virtue, Honour and Mercy; and may they ever be found in a Freemason's heart.



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The First Degree Tracing Board

During the Opening Ceremony of a Lodge meeting the Junior Deacon uncovers a Tracing Board, and during the Closing Ceremony he re-covers it. To understand why he does this we need to be aware of how Brethren in the 18th Century 'built' their Lodges. They did not have custom built rooms and met, more often than not, in a room at a local inn. It was the responsibility of the Tyler to 'build' the Lodge and he did so by drawing out in chalk on the floor the furniture and symbols used in the First Degree. After the meeting closed the Tyler would then wash the furniture and symbols from off the floor. Over time the furniture and symbols were 'traced' on a piece of cloth, which could be rolled up and used again. Eventually the cloth was replaced with a piece of wood, which became known as a Tracing Board.

Most Lodges now have permanent rooms and furniture, but they still retain the Tracing Board as part of the ceremony. It is full of symbolism and in some Lodges an explanation of the Tracing Board is sometimes given, which is quite long and detailed, so here an overview of the explanation is given.

The Lodge is a parallelepipedon, in length from East to West and in breadth between North and South. It extends from the centre of the earth to the heavens to show the universality in the science; likewise, a Mason's charity should know no bounds save those of prudence. Our Lodges are supported by three great pillars denoting Wisdom, Strength and Beauty: Wisdom to conduct us in all our undertakings, Strength to support us under all our difficulties, and Beauty to adorn the inward man.

The covering of a Freemason's Lodge is a celestial canopy of divers colours even the heavens. The way by which we hope to arrive there is by the assistance of a ladder, in Scripture called Jacob's Ladder. It reaches to the Heavens, and rests on the Volume of the Sacred Law.

The interior of a Freemason's Lodge is composed of Ornaments, Furniture, and Jewels. The Ornaments are the Mosaic Pavement, the Blazing Star and the Tessellated Border.



The furniture of the Lodge consists of the Volume of the Sacred Law, the Compasses and the Square. The Jewels of the Lodge are three moveable and three immovable. The Movable Jewels are the Square, the Level and the Plumb Rule. They are called Moveable Jewels because they are worn by the Master and his Wardens, and are transferable to their successors on nights of Installation.