

Operative to Speculative History

The jewels of modern Lodges of speculative Freemasonry have come down to us from the usages and customs of operative free masons in earlier times. In operative lodges a particular stone was used as an emblem in each of the working degrees. The candidate was told, at an appropriate stage in the ceremony, that he represented that stone being wrought from its rough hewn condition, as brought from the quarries, to a state of perfection suitable for erection as a “living stone” in that most glorious of all Temples, “that house not made with hands eternal in the heavens”. Each degree also had a representative jewel, which was a miniature representation of one of the gauges used to test the stone and the work of the degree.

The ceremonies in operative lodges reflected the various stages in the preparation, testing and erection of stones in the Temple of King Solomon at Jerusalem, emphasising their purpose and importance in the structure. The symbolic teachings also were based on the preparation, testing and incorporation of the stones in the structure. The several types of stones and the working tools and gauges used in their preparation, testing and erection, therefore, were of particular significance to the operative mason.

The jewels of the Master and Wardens of modern speculative Lodges are derived from the insignia of office worn by their counterparts in the old operative lodges. They also are the working tools of a speculative Fellow Craft Freemason, which might seem to be an anomaly, but it must be remembered that in operative days a Fellow of the Craft was a fully qualified craftsman. In operative lodges the rough ashlar typified the Apprentice and the perfect ashlar typified the Fellow of the Craft. Candidates for admission as an Apprentice were placed in the north-east corner, but qualified Fellows of the Craft seeking further advancement were placed in the south-east corner, from which is derived the practice of seating speculative Apprentices and Fellow Crafts in those corners. In speculative Lodges the Rough and Perfect Ashlars are often placed in the northeast and southeast corners, but in some Lodges they are placed in front of the Junior and Senior Wardens pedestals respectively.

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dgmentor@cyprus-freemasons.org.cy



District of Cyprus Mentoring Programme

A series of Fact Sheets for a Master Mason

MM 05 The Moveable and Immoveable Jewels

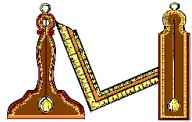


Making a daily advancement in Masonic knowledge

The Moveable and Immoveable Jewels

Each Lodge of Freemasons has six Jewels; three are moveable and three are immoveable.

The Three Moveable Jewels are :



**the Square,
the Level and
the Plumb Rule**

Among operative Masons the Square is to try, and adjust, rectangular corners of buildings, and assist in bringing rude matter into due form; the Level is to lay levels and prove horizontals; and the Plumb Rule to try and adjust uprights while fixing them on their proper bases. Among Free and Accepted Masons the Square teaches Morality, the Level, Equality and the Plumb Rule justness and uprightness of life and actions.

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. The Master is distinguished by the Square, the Senior Warden by the Level and the Junior Warden by the Plumb Rule.

The Three Immoveable Jewels are :



**The Tracing Board and
The Rough and Perfect Ashlars**

The Tracing Board is 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 Jewels on. They are called Immoveable Jewels because they lie open and immoveable in the Lodge for the Brethren to moralise on.

The following is an excerpt from the Emulation Ritual Book, First Degree Tracing Board: *Perhaps the most relevant of these Jewels to you as a progressing Mason are the Rough and Perfect Ashlars...*

The Symbolism of the Rough and Perfect Ashlars

The Rough Ashlar is a stone, rough and unhewn as taken from the quarry, until by the industry and ingenuity of the workmen it is rendered fit for the intended structure. This represents man in his infant or primitive state, until, by the kind care and attention of his parents or guardians, in giving him a liberal and virtuous education, his mind becomes cultivated, and he is thereby rendered a fit member of civilised society. The Perfect Ashlar is a stone of a true die or square, fit only to be tried by the Square and Compasses; this represents man in the decline of years, after a regular well spent life in acts of piety and virtue, which can not otherwise be tried and approved than by the Square of God's Word and the Compasses of his own self-convincing conscience.

The Symbolism behind the Rough and Perfect Ashlars at first glance is obvious, as explained above, The Rough Ashlar is the unworked stone, the ignorant, unskilled and uneducated man, and the Perfect Ashlar is that perfection towards which we all must work throughout our lives. It is your duty as a Master Mason to continually strive to better yourself both inside the Lodge and in your everyday life, aided by the great lessons Freemasonry teaches you. Make sure that you continue to smooth and work the stone (yourself), so that when your earthly time is over you are fit to ascend to those immortal mansions above.

Another meaning for the Ashlars could be to direct us to encourage the rough ashlars of society by setting a good example through words and deeds, using our Masonic working tools to work with them and smooth them, being reminded from our Masonic teaching 'that the rude material only receives it's fine polish through repeated efforts alone' and to make sure that, in addition to our own continued self-improvement we as Masons have a positive impact on human society and leave our mark behind after we are gone from this sublunary abode.