



"Our wondrous arch is yonder vaulted sky, our mighty Keystone the all seeing eye".

This comes from the notation on the floor cloth of Lodge 205, Irish Constitution, warranted on the 7 February 1749 for the 35th Regiment of Foot.

The floor cloth was the early tracing board originally drawn on the floor of the Lodge to be washed off by the Tyler when the work was finished. Travelling Military Lodges would pack away the cloth with the other lodge fittings, marching off to spread Masonry far and wide.

On this floor cloth are a cacophony of Masonic illustrations – for instance: a beehive, the emblem of which I see in my collar in some orders, the inevitable measuring tools, a coiled serpent, a rude cross adorned with a shining rose, an arc complete with dove and branch. But more especially the pillars familiar to us all joined together by a Wondrous Arch with our Mighty Keystone to prevent everything from crashing down on the Master and his Warden below.

The point is twofold: first the fact that all the various masonic disciplines working together under the direction of the Master who is, secondly, in turn, under the combined and synchronised direction of the pillars, the arch and the keystone.

ORIGINS



The origin of the Mark Degree in its many forms is unknown although, like other degrees and orders, the subject has had many students. We must consider their findings in the light in which they are given. That is to say that opinion, for that is all it is, is dependent on the individual's personal interpretation of the meaning of the full extent of the Masonic System.

That Masonry has been and is a vehicle for esoteric thought is widely accepted together with the frustrating knowledge that the true origins of Freemasonry have been lost more than once in the mists of time. Therefore we must consider the traditions of Masonry and not the number of degrees especially when investigating that which lies beyond "The Craft". We are then led to accept that the development of Mark Masonry is linked with the development of both Craft and Royal Arch Masonry and that we must leave the Mark Masons all too common isolation.

What we now know as the Mark Degree has evolved from a number of related and unrelated traditions, portions of which have been variously adopted or bolted onto what we may now call "Keystone Mark Masonry". These degrees among others include – Mark Man, Mark Master, Link and Chain, Fugitive Mark, Cains Mark, Link and Wrestle, Black Mark, et al.

These degrees did not always use the central theme of rejection, but the keystone component is always very prominent. Other selected "bolt-ons" appear. In the Link ritual, for instance, Masons are united in a link to heave aside the discarded stone too large for one man to lift, and in an old Mark Masters degree

1000 Mark Masters were allocated 50 to each of the twenty lodges to re-examine the stones that arrived at Jerusalem and to mark them for location purposes.

One foundation shaking revelation can be found in the ritual of the Early Grand Rite sixth degree (the fifth degree of this rite being the Fellow



Craft from which our own Mark historical lecture comes from) that Hiram being a bit peeved that Adoniram had displayed remarkable ingenuity in aligning the construction of the works (and in this particular narrative is related to him) organized the assassination of Adoniram by leaving a loose lintel at the north entrance to collapse. King Solomon was so upset that he ordered the north gate to be built closed as it remains today with both treasurer, secretary and Registrar of Marks with their backs truly up against the wall, with no retreat.

In the old Dunkenfield ritual from West Riding the candidate is required to go in search of a stone of peculiar shape and when found to lift it with his thumb and forefinger only half an inch from the top and to return. He fails his test and on his return is told that if he rubbed his thumb and forefinger in the grit on the floor before lifting the stone he would have been successful – a lesson that wisdom being preferable to strength.

DEFINITIONS

We must therefore define Key Stone Masonry as a working using the Key Stone as the backbone of its symbolic properties. Without this definition we could become side-tracked.

We must further define where Keystone Mark Masonry fits into the present scheme of things. That is of it being divided into two main ritual families and that in one or other form is a necessary qualification of a Candidate for Exaltation in the Royal Arch under every Masonic Obedience in the world except that of England and Constitutions deriving from United Grand Lodge - a situation which forms a vital part of Mark history. The Degree is the only degree (with the exception of the Operatives and Select Master) that deals specifically with the physical construction of the temple.

The Schaw statutes, or charges for Operative Masons, which date from a Conference held in Holyrood Palace on 28 December 1598, states



that "No master or Fellow of Craft is to be received or admitted except in the presence of six Masters and two entered apprentices, the Warden of the Lodge being one of the six, the date thereof being orderly booked and his name and Mark inserted in the same book".

Also, among the "Steinmetzen" of Germany in the 17th century, an Apprentice attaining the rank of Fellow-of-Craft was formerly admitted into the fraternity under an obligation that he would not knowingly alter or change his Mark. This was known as "pledging his Mark" which then became his distinctive property. He was required to engrave his mark on all his completed work, but he was severely punished if he did so before his work was approved.

It is interesting to note here that in the Irish Mark ritual one of the reasons for rejection is that the work is not correctly marked.

However before we become too heady with triumph, we must consider that both in past and sadly present times, the placing of a mark by an illiterate in lieu of a signature is common, furthermore the placing of marks on completed work is not peculiar to Stone Masons alone, but can be found on many other articles produced by craftsmen the most familiar being that of the Silversmith.

It is therefore gratifying to see that scholars of Masonry have kept Masons Marks as a separate study and have not been naïve enough to base the whole origin of Keystone Mark Masonry on them.

We can therefore consider the placing of a Mark as another tradition. The maintenance of this tradition is illustrated in the records of Lodge No 24, Peebles Kilwinning, where in the eighteenth century speculative Masons registered their Marks, one, that of a Captain of the Kings Foots, being that of a "V" shaped shield, bearing on each half a small cross, the whole being surmounted on a larger cross, the point being that an army captain of those times most probably could write, so that his mark was purely traditional.



GRAND LODGE OF ENGLAND

The Grand Lodge of England was formed in 1717. Not so grand as is known or implied today, but a parochial gathering of four Lodges "having much of late indulged their happy genius for Masonry of every sort and revived the drooping lodges of London" - here I quote from the 1723 and 1738 editions of the Constitutions, and further "wherein the forms and usages of the most ancient and worshipful Fraternity are wisely propagated, and the Royal Art duly cultivated, and the cement of the Brotherhood preserved, so that the whole body resembles a well-built Arch".

The formation of Grand Lodge was not an act of dictatorial power-mongering, but rather an extension of fraternal feelings in a London ravaged by civil and political intrigue and troubles, a perspective of events in France and rumblings of civil war, A journey from London to York, where we know Masonry had been worked as an "inherent right" from time immemorial, would take over a week.

The reference to "Masonry of every sort" tells us that Masonry in all its traditions was being worked far and wide and possibly that even the variances within the four founding lodges was accepted, this is reinforced by the statement "that the whole Body resembles a well built Arch" especially interesting when considering the relationships of Craft, Mark and Royal Arch Masonry.

This somewhat charitable view of Masonry by Grand Lodge had by 1741 changed when some 189 Lodges were entered on the roll. Another change occurred in the period 1742 to 1745 when 36 London Lodges were erased with a further 11 lapsed by 1748. Various resolutions of Grand Lodge indicate that it now was attempting to bring all Lodges in London into its jurisdiction and preventing the formation of so called "irregular Lodges".

If old Lodges were still working in London outside the jurisdiction of Grand Lodge there can be no doubt that a similar increase in "irregular"



lodges was occurring outside London and equally significant is the development of Masonry as a whole in the sister kingdoms of Scotland and Ireland.

TIME IMMEMORIAL

It is here that we introduce what some may call the swashbuckling hero of the Mark.

Thomas Dunckerley was born in London in 1724 and at the age of ten joined the Navy in which he served with distinction for some 26 years but being of low birth rose only to the rank of Gunner. Returning to England in 1760 to find that his Mother had died a few years before but had left a solemn declaration on her death bed that Thomas was in fact the illegitimate son of George II born when he was the Prince of Wales. The fact of the birth had never been made aware to the Prince and George II died without knowledge of his son. It seems that no attempt was made to bring this romantic story to the attention of George III and it was not until 1767 that the declaration was laid before George III, the grandson of Dunckerleys Father. The petition being successful he was awarded a pension, a suite of apartments at Hampton Court and was permitted to bear the Royal Arms with the appropriate mark of bastardy with the motto "Fato non Merito" - "Destiny not Merit" and the name FitzGeorge (Son of George)

He was probably initiated into one of the Naval Lodges at Plymouth and with his new found fortune rose through the masonic hierarchy and with the help of his close friends – Prince of Wales, Duke of Clarence and Prince Edward to name but a few! Was made a Past Senior Grand Warden and by merit (this time) was Provincial GM and Grand Superintendent of Bristol, Dorset, Essex, Gloucester, Hereford, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. He also wrote a few Masonic songs.

But far higher than any of these titles and offices, and of far more lasting importance to the Craft, was the position occupied by Dunkerley as an instructor of the Lodges, and a



reformer, or at least a remodeller, of the system of lectures. To these duties he was called by the Grand Lodge of England, which authorised him to construct a new code of lectures, a careful revision of the existing ritual, and a collation of all the so called “ancient formulas”.

For this task he was eminently qualified. He showed a fair share of learning, and with a philosophical spirit, he was prepared to amplify the existing system by the addition of symbolism, and the improvement of that which had already been introduced by his predecessors. He was also liberal in his views, and not affected by the prejudices against what were called the innovations of Dermott (The Ancients), he did not hesitate to avail himself of Dermott’s ideas. Dunkerley often visited the Lodges of the Ancients, for the purpose of ascertaining what were the essential differences between the two systems, and of that which was good he culled the best, and transplanted it into the workings of the Legitimate Grand Lodge (the Moderns). The results were not a fleeting variation but are evident even in the ritual of today. The most important being that which affected the Third degree. Dunkerley reconstructed the Royal Arch and introduced into the Grand Lodge of England; not, however, without opposition.

By this innovation, the true Word, which had previously been a part of the M.M. degree was transferred to the Royal Arch and the Third degree was made incomplete, and required to be supplemented by a higher one.

It is said that Mark Masonry has been worked from time immemorial (known as “TI”) in Yorkshire and the Midland Counties of England, but our first written record is from the Phoenix Royal Arch Chapter No 257, Portsmouth, that the Mark Degree was introduced after a visit to the north by our old friend Dunckerley.

From the minute book written in Masonic Cypher, it is recorded that on the 11 August 1769 at a Royal Arch Chapter Meeting "The Provincial Grand Master (Dunckerley) brought the warrant of the Chapter and having lately received the Mark he made the brethren Mark Masons



and Mark Masters and each chose their Mark.....". Here notice the distinction of "Masons" and "Masters".

The records of Phoenix Lodge show that up until at least 1844 no brother received the Royal Arch without first receiving the Mark, but that there is no way of knowing what the Mark Degree consisted of, but it is imagined that the ceremony was slight consisting of selecting a Mark and receiving instructions as to the peculiar signs and secrets.

However in the minute book of St Thomas Lodge, London, No 142, an entry on the 9 August 1777 reads: "The WM with the following brothers of the Lodge were made Mark Masons and Mark Masters".

Here again we have the distinct mention of two ceremonies.

CLARIFICATION

Clarification of two separate ceremonies comes from Lodge Banff in a minute dated 7 January 1778.

"Therefore resolved that in time coming all members that shall hereafter raise to the degree of Mark Mason shall pay one mark Scots, but not to obtain the degree of Mark Mason before they have passed Fellow-Craft. And those that shall take the degree of Mark Master Mason shall pay one shilling and sixpence sterling into the Treasurer for behoof of the Lodge. None to attain to the Degree of Mark Master Mason until they are raised Master".

Here, apart from two ceremonies, we also find the entry qualifications.

The history of Masonry in England during the later part of the 18th and the early part of the 19th century has had many Students and, although the battles of the Antients and Moderns is fascinating, I will mention only those salient points which refer directly to Mark Masonry.

In a less frustrating environment the sister kingdoms of Ireland and Scotland produce some interesting references. Irish brethren were what their brothers in England would call Antient Masons. They



distinguished between an "Arch Degree" and a "Royal Arch Degree". A jewel of the Arch degree is found to have on its reverse side the familiar letters H.T.W.S.S.T.K.S. in a circle enclosing three axes.

In Scottish and Irish documentation there is constant mention of direct links with Assemblies and Pories of Knights Templar and in the Bye Laws of 1790 of the Worshipful Encampment of Knights Templar No 117, the degrees of Knights Templar, Malta and Mark Masons are mentioned together and there are frequent mentions to "Marked Masons" and "Marked on the Temple".

The progenitor of the Edinburgh Royal Arch Chapter was the Grand Assembly of Knights Templar in Edinburgh and according to their minutes worked a number of steps in Masonry:

- Past the Chair
- Excellent
- Super Excellent
- Arch
 - Royal Arch
- Knights Templar

Notice the mention of the Arch Degree.

The ensuing Edinburgh Royal Arch Chapter worked many degrees including Ark, Mark and Link, and, at a meeting on the 16 August 1818, it was decided to move monies that had been collected at the Initiation of Mark Masons from the Templar Benevolent Society to the Chapters Charity Fund, a move which nowadays would cause a portion of apoplexy among various treasurers!

TROUBLED TIMES



We leave this, what might be described by some as, "avant-garde" and "free thinking" masonic environment and return to the grumblings in England.

The sins of omission and commission of Grand Lodge were causing dissatisfaction together with many defections of both members and Lodges to so called "irregular" masonry. The influx of Irish Masons into England during the 1730's fuelled the fire. Most of them upon applying to join lodges refused to accept the revised constitutions of Grand Lodge referring to Irish Grand Lodge Constitution which was the original English constitution by Anderson burgled by an Irish publisher and still maintaining its charitable attitude to all facets of Masonry. This served to drive the Irish Masons into either joining existing irregular lodges or to form new ones outside the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge of England. This in turn led to the division between the Antients' and the Moderns, the moderns refusing to acknowledge, as the Antients put it, the "ancient landmarks". One of those landmarks was the degree of the Royal Arch which was as they put it "the root, heart and marrow of Masonry".

This conflict, of course, put the Mark into extreme jeopardy.

The split within English Craft Masonry came to an end on December 27th 1813 with the Act of Union ending some 11 years of discussion, but not the moves and counter moves of intrigue so enjoyed by the English.

Most of us are aware of the words of Article 2 of the Act of Union - it is of course reproduced in our current craft book of Constitutions on Page 13 under the sub-heading "Preliminary Declaration".

"It was declared and pronounced that pure Ancient Masonry consists of three degrees and no more That is to say Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft, and the Master Mason, including the Supreme Order of the Holy Royal Arch".



A confusing statement which when considered leaves the Mark out in the cold, The deal was made and brought about the sacrifice of the Mark for the Royal Arch . This action has over the years been softened by logical Masonic explanation and the soothing therapy of time.

However what is not printed in our current book of constitutions is the full wording of Article 2 which goes on to say:

"But this Article is not intended to prevent any Lodge or Chapter from holding a meeting in any of the

Degrees of the Orders of Chivalry, according to the constitutions of the said Orders".

A TIME OF GENTLEMEN AND RESISTANCE

As we have found, a Mark Degree was in many districts associated with Knight Templary so that this Act of Union has proved to be not just the simple effort of regularization and good housekeeping, but a marvelous piece of diplomacy and reconciliation, and was viewed by many at the time as conceding to the legality of Mark Masonry. This is illustrated by the minutes of one of the so-called "Lodges of Reconciliation" to which the Secretary of Lodge of Hope No 302, Bro Richard Schofield was invited. It is noted in the Lodge's archives that he reported: "By the authority of the Grand Master, and arrangements then come to, the Lodge of Hope was entitled to continue to confer the Mark under the authority of the Old York Manuscript Constitution". This was duly done and continued until the Mark Lodge was enrolled under the Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons as Old York T.I in 1873.

This instance was like so many others, merely a gentleman's agreement with Mark and other sections of Masonry working in isolation, virtual orphans. As far as Mark Masonry is concerned, this was to change in 1851 when, in London, six brethren of Bon Accord Royal Arch Chapter of Aberdeen had been advised and petitioned from London to grant a



Charter as the "London Bon Accord" and on the 19th September 1851 the duly warranted Lodge held its first meeting. The Supreme Grand Chapter of Scotland did everything in its power to recall the warrant knowing that it was unconstitutionally given. The new lodge remained steadfast and eventually the Bon Accord Chapter was suspended with all its members in 1855, never to meet again - the Mark Lodge had by this time grown to 120 members - the orphans had started a "resistance movement". The impact of this and the formation of other Mark Lodges led to a joint committee meeting at Grand Lodge to consider "the Masonic Propriety" of the Mark degree. This committee consisted of seven brethren each from the United Grand Lodge and the Supreme Grand Chapter - so on March 5th 1856 the committee report was received declaring that the Mark degree did not form part of the Royal Arch degree and that it was not essential to Craft Masonry. With the usual diplomacy, however, the committee was of the opinion that there was nothing "objectionable" in the degree and might form a "graceful addition to the Fellow Crafts degree".

This report led to a motion - unanimously agreed upon at Grand Lodge that: "the degree of Mark Mason or Mark Master Mason is not at variance with the Antient Landmarks and that the degree be an addition to and form part of Craft Masonry". Recognized at last? -- No -- this resolution was reversed at the next quarterly communication on June 4th 1856 and were "pledged against all false doctrines", thus closing any chance of true recognition of Mark Masonry by United Grand Lodge. Our Mark brethren, however, were made of sterner stuff and immediately set about to form a Grand Lodge of their own and within a month of the June Communication the Mark Grand Lodge was erected. Our old friends "Bon Accord" were there together with "Northumberland and Berwick", "Newcastle on Tyne", "Royal Cumberland", "Bath" and "Old Kent" London. But many Mark Lodges did not recognise Mark Grand Lodge



still sticking to the authority to work the degree by virtue of Article 2. Other lodges applied to the Grand Chapter of Scotland for warrants - some 50 Lodges, whilst others were more direct in their scorn for the Mark Grand Lodge - one distinguished Mason calling it "Born in Sin and shaped in iniquity".

OPEN MARKET

It is interesting and some might say, now viewing in hindsight, humorous to note that the original Royal Arch warrants issued to Scotland, were from the English Moderns Grand Chapter and almost like some inside Masonic joke, these Chapters cohesively were to issue Mark warrants to English lodges - but however they looked upon it that as United Grand Lodge and Chapter had refused to adopt control of Mark Masonry - England was a free and open market for the Mark. Whilst the English Mark Grand Lodge and the Supreme Royal Arch Grand Chapter of Scotland were trying desperately to consolidate their positions, one of the most remarkable of all Masonic organizations came to the fore - the so-called "Travelling Mark Lodge" of Ashton-under-Lyme.

This Lodge has from time immemorial worked not only Keystone Mark, but also Ark, Babylon Pass and many others. The lodge had no official meeting place, but moved around the northern counties from one Craft Lodge to another, meeting on a Sunday once every three months. The format was that of waiting until the craft host lodge had opened in the three degrees and then entering and taking over the chair. The candidates were then balloted for in the third degree, then the lodge was opened in the Mark and the ceremony continued with. The travelling lodge not only spread the word, but also left behind during its travels potential Mark lodges. They did not however approve of the Mark Grand Lodge and was in fact the last "time immemorial" lodge to capitulate, not doing so until February 17th 1900. Up until then their disdain for Grand Mark Lodge was clearly demonstrated when on Sunday January 18th 1857 the "Honorable United Grand Lodge of



Mark Master Masons of the Ashton-under-Lyme District" was formed. It is not known just how many daughter lodges came from this, but Joppa now No 11 under Mark Grand Lodge was the first. Mark Grand Lodge did despite all the obstacles, thrives and steadily increased its number of newly warranted Lodges.

AGREEMENT

One last problem remained - Scottish Grand Chapter continued to sanction the formation of new Mark Lodges and even went so far as to, in 1870, create Lancashire, a Provincial Grand Mark District and to appoint a District Grand Master, a move not well received by Mark Grand Lodge. Eventually, however, agreement was reached and since 1878 and "Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons of England and Wales and the Dominion and Dependencies of the British Crown" (later shortened in direct proportion to loss of Empire) has been the sole ruler of the Mark Degree in all English Masonic territory. The successful end to a long and bumpy road? Yes, for Mark as we know it, but as with all study and research for every answer found more questions arise.

Q AND A

We know that our present Craft rituals have altered over the years. The so-called "exposures" of the early eighteen hundreds were thought to have promoted changes to the "proofs" required. In obedience to their obligation our ancient brethren passed on ritual and symbolism by word of mouth and it is quite possible

that one set of ritual was given the name of another (even we have that problem sometimes!) lost and forgotten parts invented and parts of one jointed with the parts of another. We may never know the true origins of our Mark degree. We have an idea that it pre dates the current Craft third degree (the Hiram legends not the sole property of Craft Masonry being added onto the then two "regular" degrees). With



no real link as such between, say, the Fellowcraft's degree and the Royal Arch degree, it is difficult to place any degree into a convenient slot. The following two quotations illustrate the varying opinions over the years.

W J Hugham in his work "The English Rite: commented in around 1884 "It is much to be regretted that after a lapse of over a hundred and fifty years, the inordinate craving to amplify, distort and sometimes misrepresent the beautiful ceremonies of the Craft, which were, doubtless, in part adapted and continued from the older organisation, has not yet exhausted itself." On the other hand J E S Tuckett in his contribution to A.Q.C.vol xxxii expounds a theory that the degrees outside the Craft have been founded on a pre 1717 (Grand Lodge) "stone of legend, tradition and symbolism of wide extent, from which the Grand Lodge of 1717 selected only a portion to evolve into the three Craft Degrees and the Royal Arch.

A WAY FORWARD

Have we of the Mark been given a "raw deal"? Maybe not. Perhaps the Great Overseer has worked his mysterious ways to give the Mark degree the strength and resilience needed to become the warm and special ritual it is, unpretentious, and sound in its Masonic teachings. A degree which should play an important part in shaping the life of any man who wishes to become a true Freemason.

Mark Well

W.Bro. Vic Pugh DistGADC