

THE MARKS OF MASONRY

The subject of Marks is an interesting aspect in the history of Masonry, both Operative and Speculative. The Mark Degree forms a very special link in the chain connecting the Speculative Craft Lodges of today with the Old Operative systems of Freemasonry. The present rituals have been founded undoubtedly on the ancient Craft Legends of these Operative systems. The rituals and lectures are most probably based upon incidents before or at the building of King Solomon's Temple.

The use of Marks in ancient Operative masonry at the time of building King Solomons Temple, would have had a very practical purpose. It is contended that the stones and timbers were not Marked for any personal purpose by the workmen, who "hewed, cut, and squared" them. The Mark was placed upon them by the Mark Men, who superintended the Masons and the carpenters in the quarries and the forests, and who placed a Mark on each stone and timber so that when transported to Jerusalem, the builders would find no difficulty when guided by these Marks in placing those materials together which were intended to be in juxtaposition.

These marks were mathematical figures, squares, levels, and perpendiculars which were used by command of King Solomon. The Mark Masters were to examine the materials when they were brought to the Temple to see that every part duly corresponded, and thus to prevent confusion and mistake in fitting the respective parts to their proper places. In doing this they were of course, guided by these construction marks which had been placed upon the stones and other materials by the Mark Men. The Mark Masters then placed an additional Mark upon them to show that they approved the work.

In our Speculative allegorical rituals it is said that at the period of building King Solomons Temple, to ensure completeness and accuracy in all departments of work it

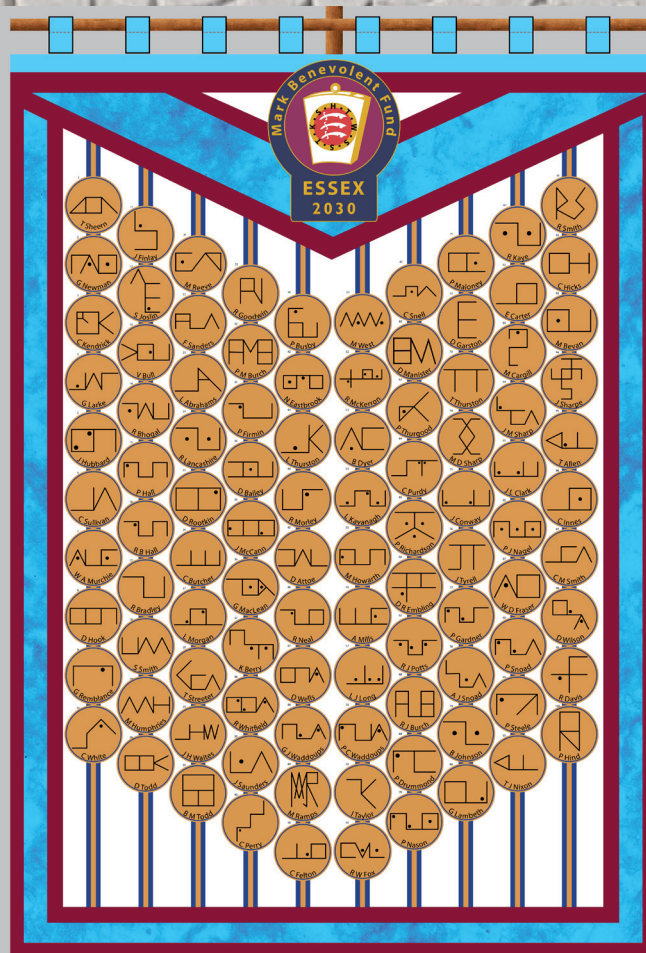
was necessary to establish a system of grades among the immense number of workmen employed. Under this system each member of each grade Marks his work with his own peculiar Mark or Symbol, thereby enabling overseers to recognise the hands from which the work came and to reward them accordingly. Thus, it can be said that a Mark Master Mason's Mark is his monogram, a unique symbol granted to him at his Advancement, and which he figuratively chisels onto the surface of a stone for the purpose of identifying it as his own work, and distinguishing it from that of other

workmen, so that he might be made responsible for its imperfection or receive due credit for its merit.

Masons Marks have been discovered on the Pyramids of Egypt, on the ruined buildings in Pompeii, Greece and Rome, and on the ancient cathedrals, castles and buildings that are to be found in almost every country of Europe. In England there are to be found Masons Marks from the time of the Medieval Operative Masons. In particular, evidence of these marks are found in almost every Castle, many Churches and especially in our great Cathedrals. Amongst these is much evidence of both personal and construction Marks. The construction Marks

we understand as their use has subsisted since time immemorial. The personal Marks may well have been used to ensure the correct craftsman was paid, but just think, these Marks may represent the very origins of Freemasonry as the operatives organized themselves.

Although only used in the Mark degree today where the Marks are mostly personal monograms constructed using the Masonic Alphabet, the fact of the existence of this degree, which continues the usage of Marks, shows it is an indissoluble link in the correlative chain which connects the Operative Masonry of the Medieval Age with the Speculative Masonry of the present day. As our ancient brethren took great pride in their work which is shown by their carefully cut Marks, so should we continue to do so in the labour of our daily advancement by "Marking well"



Festival Banner of Members Marks