

Manor of Newland Lodge No 6403



Booklet No.3

The First Degree Tracing Board.



Figure 19. First Degree, Emulation Ritual.

Foreword.

The views expressed in these pages are mine and do not necessarily reflect the views of any other Lodge Member.

When we were made a mason, we promised to “make a daily advance in Masonic knowledge.” Our Master undertakes to “... impart light and instruction to the Brethren of the Lodge.”

Those are our good intentions but time is always against us. We meet, have an enjoyable meal together and depart. We have our business commitments, our wife and family to consider and even the ritual to learn and memorise. Few of us , except old ‘crusties’ like me, have the time to do a little research into Masonic matters.

The purpose of these pamphlets is to give a brief overview of various topics that may interest you or about which you may be curious. If you are seriously interested then please contact me and I will point you to all of the sources I have used where there is a wealth of detailed information.

Remember, I am not an academic or a scholar but just a Freemason with curiosity and time. I have only scratched the surface, as best I can and used (pinched) information from various web sites and from the Transactions of Quatuor Coronati

There is no intention here to add to or subtract from our ritual. The ritual book is of primary importance.

Bro. Alec Hall January 2005

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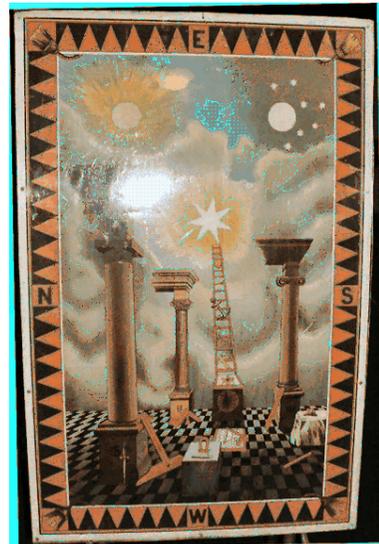
Please let me have your views and comments.



This beautiful First Degree Tracing Board was designed and painted by Bro. H. H. Tombs in 1948 and is now used in some New Zealand Lodges. I'm indebted to **Phil Brooke Grand Lodge of New Zealand and the transactions of Waikato Lodge of Research 445** for this information and images. Thanks to **W.Bro. Keith Walker (Kaimanawa 426 Taupo, New Zealand)** for a great deal of support and the information on this Board.

From Doug (GLNS)- Nova Scotia
 1st Degree Tracing Board. Photo taken at a meeting
 in 2004 - Nova Scotia.

Notice the Anchor on the ladder



Introduction

When you were Initiated into the Craft, the Tracing Board lay in the Centre of the Lodge. You may be interested in it's history which is the purpose of these notes.

In these notes I shall refer to Operative Masons and Freemasons or Free-Masons.

Operative masons are the group of Craftsmen who earned their living by working with stone. They had their morals and possibly symbols, many of which can be seen in modern Freemasonry.

Freemasonry probably began in c1600 at the height of the renaissance when secret societies were popular. It was then that the long road of development of that society, veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols, began and led to us.

These Freemasons invented little but took from, borrowed, adopted the history and ritual of the Operatives and biblical sources and modified and expanded and incorporated it.

On building sites they had huts in which to work sleep and eat. These were referred to as Lodges. Maybe a drawing on the floor was the 'essential' lodge! (There will be greater detail in another Leaflet concerning our Origins but a few thoughts are essential.)

The Operatives had but one 'degree'. When you were made a mason, probably with the accompanying ceremony, you became a Fellow or Fellow of Craft. You became a Mason! The ceremony would have included the reading of the ancient Charges to add dignity and authority to the proceedings and no doubt to make it a memorable occasion for the new Fellow of Craft.

Some Fellow Craft were sufficiently experienced (and perhaps adventurous enough?) to become Masters of the Work. They, the Masters were, with few exceptions, the architect and constructor of the building. They employed Fellow Craft, (Journeyman) to do the work. In c1300, apprentices were rare and little more than chattel.

At the end of the 1500's in Scotland, some prentices (apprentices) after serving for a few years were admitted to the Operatives Lodge as Entered Prentices. The degree of a Master Mason didn't appear until the 1700's and a large part of the old Fellow Craft ceremony was used. A new ritual for the Fellow Craft was created.

The Master of a Lodge, as a separate status didn't appear until later.

Tracing Boards of the Operatives.

The Operatives must have used tracing boards in their work.

The first mention I can find of a tracing board is related to a French Mason who used a tracing board for his designs. c 1290

There follow mentions of the 'tracery' which was presumably a hut and in some cases on larger sites, huts, where the Master of Works would draw out the plans for the intended structure and it's component blocks, for the instruction of his 'fellows'.

The tracing board used by the Operative mason is the ancestor of the board for the Master to lay lines and draw designs on and it is this board which is shown, only as a symbol on our First Degree Tracing Board.

It is referred to as part of the ritual in Pritchards exposure 'Masonry Dissected' published in

1730. (The 'exposure' was a great success!)

Remember that at this time the ritual was a catechism (a series of questions and answers.)

The relevant part of the 'exposure' is:-

A. *Square, Level and Plumb-Rule,*

Q. *What are their Uses.*

A. *Square to lay down True and Right Lines, Level to try all Horizontals, and the Plumb-Rule to try all Uprights.*

Q. *What are the Immoveable Jewels?*

A. *Trasel Board, Rough Ashler, and Broach'd Thurnel.*

Q. *What are their Uses?*

A. **Trasel Board** for the [M]aster to draw his Designs upon. **Rough Ashler** for the Fellow-Craft to try their Jewels upon, and the **Broach'd Thurnel** for the Enter'd 'Prentice to learn to work upon.

Q. *Have you any Lights in your Lodge?*

A. *Yes, Three.*

Q. *What do they represent?*

A. *Sun, Moon and Master -Mason,*

N.B. *These Lights are three targe Candles placed on high Candlesticks. [I don't know what a 'thurnel' is. Please let me know if you do!*

I assume that a TRASEL (or trassel) board is a trestle board.]

I can find out no further details concerning the Operatives Tracing Board.

From Floor Drawing to our modern Tracing Board.

The Operative Master would undoubtedly have needed to produce an outline of the building, probably on the ground and then provide drawings and templates for his craftsmen to use in the cutting of the blocks and decorations to be used in the construction.

Lodge meetings were called when required to make a mason, for administrative or for disciplinary purposes.

At some point, a drawing of 'the lodge' was made on the floor of the hut or sometimes in the open air. This drawing WAS the Lodge and in it the ceremonies may have been performed. The master was quite used to drawing buildings on the ground so the drawing of the Lodge on the ground would have been quite natural.

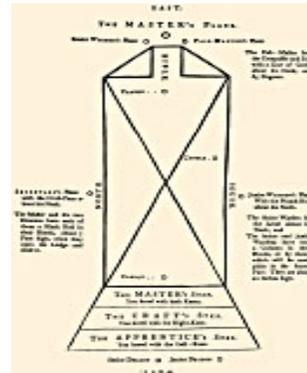


figure 2. The Master's Place.

The drawing above is taken from 'Three Distinct Knocks'. An exposure of Freemasonry published in 1760 but suspect our Operative ancestors would have recognized it instantly.

A. In their hearts. -

Q. To whom do they reveal them? ...

A. To none but Brothers and Fellows, known to be such on due trial, proof, and examination, or in the body of a just and lawful Lodge. -

Q. How do they reveal them? ...

A. By the help of a **key**

Q. Does that key hang or lie? ...

A. It hangs and does not lie. -

Q. Where does It hang? ...

A. Within an arch of bone-

Q. What does it hang by? ...

A. The thread of life, in the passage of entrance. nine inches or a span long-

Q. Why Is it so nearly connected with the heart? ...

A. The tongue being the index of the mind, it ought to utter nothing but what the heart truly dictates. -

Q. To solve this Masonic mystery, Can you tell me what manner of metal this **key** is composed of? ...

A. No metal at all; it is a tongue of good report. which ought always to speak as well of a Brother In his absence as in his presence, and when that cannot be done with honour. justice, or propriety, that adopts the distinguishing virtue of a Mason

Q. What virtue is that? ... A. Silence or Secrecy

Acknowledgments and grateful thanks to:-

Ars Quatuor Coronatorum Transactions (Various inc.V75)

Vic Lewis of the Grand Lodge of Nova Scotia

Grand Lodge of British Columbia and the Yukon.

Bro. Keith Walker. New Zealand.

Bradford University

Tracing Boards by T. O. Haunch

600 years of Ritual H. Carr. AQC

Grand Lodge of Queensland Australia.

Grand Lodge of New York.

Doug Welsh Grand Historian, GLNS

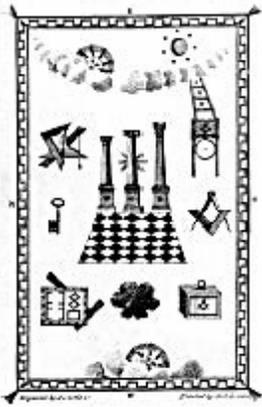


Fig. 7. First Degree Tracing Board.

and the Tracing Board no doubt helped with the ritual. To the right is a First Degree Tracing Board of 1801 by John Cole.. Notice the symbolism on this board and the diagonal squared pavement.

Some of these symbols and notably the Key have been lost from our board and from the ritual. "... lock up our secrets" But where's the key?

Perhaps we 'Square' the Lodge to avoid spoiling the Drawing or Cloth on the floor of our meeting rooms.

Current Tracing Boards

Development continued and, on the front cover there is the Emulation First Degree Board that came into use in the late 1800's.

This 'Emulation' board is used in Australia and other parts of the world but other jurisdictions do have their own design. In Nova Scotia , some lodges use a Tracing Board which probably dates from the end of the 18th Century and include these symbols.

In the jurisdiction of the GL of New York, Tracing Boards are no longer used.. In Canada, Tracing cloths/boards are on permanent display in some lodges. They hang on the wall of the Lodge room for all to see. (Note the connection with the Scottish Practice of the 1700's.?)

In New Zealand in 1948 a new, and very beautiful Tracing board was designed and is in use in some Lodges This design is shown on the back cover of this leaflet.

The lost symbols.

There are a number of symbols which have been lost to modern freemasons although some of them can be seen on the earlier design of Tracing Board.. They are briefly:-

The **pot of incense** is an emblem of a pure heart,

The **sword** and naked heart illustrate that justice will sooner or later overtake us

The **anchor** and ark are emblems of a well grounded hope and a well spent life.

The **hour glass** is an emblem of human life. Behold how swiftly the sands run and how rapidly our lives are drawing to a close.

The **Scythe** is an emblem of Time, which cuts the brittle thread of life and launches us into eternity. The **Key**

In a Lecture on the Various rituals of Freemasonry

delivered in the **Witham Lodge**, Lincoln, 1863, by

THE REV. G. OLIVER, D.D. PAST D.P.G.M. FOR Lincolnshire Dr. Oliver deplored the loss of the key from our ritual. As you know, the early ritual of c1720 was a catechism (question and answer) The section dealing with the **key** is as follows.

Q. Have Masons any secrets? ...

A. They have; many valuable ones-

Q. Where do they keep them? ...

This floor drawing is the template for the flooring of a Freemasons Lodge and the ancestor of our **Tracing Board**.

To add weight to this statement, I add the following quotation.

"In the context we are now to consider, it should be borne in mind that 'the lodge' is taken to refer to the essential lodge, the ritual enclosure of the primitive mason lodge which, indoors, became an outline diagram on the floor of the meeting room. It should be noted that the latter [meeting room] was not 'the lodge'."

The continued use of the floor drawing is illustrated by the ceremony for Consecrating a Lodge written by Preston c1790

"The Grand Master and his Officers . . . having taken their stations, and the lodge, which is placed in the centre, being covered with white satin, the ceremony of Consecration commences."

Development of the Tracing Boards

So secretive were our Freemason ancestors that they committed very little to writing. (Things were a little better in Scotland due to the intervention of the Kings Master of Works but that's another story.) We must therefore skip a few years to the late 1600's.

Freemasons meetings were held in a suitable room of a tavern. A pub to you and I. 'The Lodge' was drawn on the floor of the room by the Tyler and carefully removed after the meeting lest our hidden arts and secret mysteries should become known by the unworthy. What a job that must have been.

Fortunately for us, there were various exposures of Freemasonry published in the early to mid 1700's and it is from these that much evidence can be obtained.

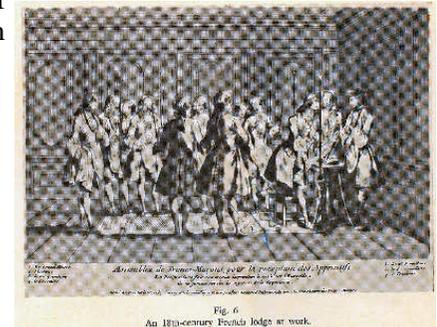


Fig. 6. An 18th-century French Lodge at work.

The following (from AQC75) is a description of the preparation of the 'Floor' used at Initiations in the 1750's

.... Meanwhile, in the lodge-room, a figure known as "The Lodge" (forerunner of tracing boards) was drawn on the floor at the upper end with charcoal and chalk ; but red and white tape might be tacked down instead, to avoid stains. Originally it was an " oblong square" set east and west, with three symbolical steps at the west end, but J. & B. describes a number of emblems drawn within it and contemporary engravings point to a rich variety of symbols. Hiram says that the design depended on the fancy of the person who draws it. In lodges abstaining from chalk and charcoal, real objects were laid within the outline of tape.....

The Floor Drawings of 'The Lodge' became more complicated and probably beyond the ability of many Tylers. Floor Cloths were introduced to overcome this difficulty. The next picture shows a floor cloth taken from another Exposure published in France 1745.

The introduction of lodge cloths or " floorings " (as they were often called) must have met with considerable opposition from conservative quarters. We gain a hint of this from the French exposure of 1745,.. Trahi, which was widely circulated, and which appeared in

England, in translation... In this work it is said: —

" The Lodge proper, i.e., the figures drawn on the floor on Reception days, must be quite literally crayonned, and must not be painted on a cloth which is kept speciall for those days, as they do in some Lodges " ¹²

There is a famous quote from 1759 in the Scottish Grand Lodge to the effect that the Lodge St. Andrews had been ordered from ever using again a painted flooring because "a painted cloth containing the flooring of a Master's Lodge was hanging publicly exposed in a painter's shop," and the Grand Lodge considered that some "pernicious consequences to Masonry" would occur if this event occurred again.

Despite instructions from the Scottish Grand Lodge among others, the Tylers ignored this demand and continued to use the floor cloth. And I don't blame them.

Although it was usually the Tyler's duty to 'draw the Lodge' sometimes it would be illustrated by a Member well skilled in that art. It is of interest to note that whilst the practice of 'Forming the Lodge' in this manner continued for many years in various parts of the country we do find a record of a painted cloth as early as 1737:

Brother William Goudge this night made a present to this Lodge of a painted cloath representing the several forms of Masons Lodges. (Minutes, 14 March 1737, Medina Lodge, No. 55, Cozves.)

Henry Sadler states this was probably the first substitute for the old custom of 'drawing the Lodge' on the floor and it was the forerunner of Tracing Boards. (Thomas Dunckerley, p. 160, London, 1891.)

To digress just a little, this may well be the ancestor of the the 'cloth' used in some Jurisdictions. The 'chart' (c1800) was obtained with the help of Doug Walsh and I quote a part of his e-mail to me:-

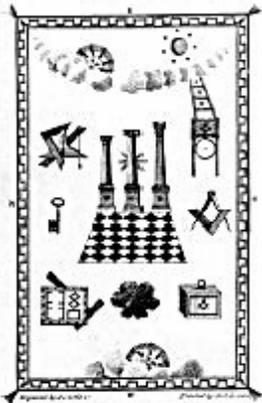


Fig. 7. First Degree Tracing Board.

As you are no doubt aware, many of the Grand Lodges of North America claim descent in some way from the Antients' Grand Lodge, and of those, many retain "charts" for Candidate instruction which resemble three I have located on ebay referenced below,.....

My Mother Lodge in New Brunswick works a ritual called "Antient York Rite as practised in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts", and used the three charts that are now on sale. In design, I believe they are fairly old, and may contain some of the elements you were seeking. Nova Scotia Lodges have generally ceased using these charts, as I have told you.

Doug Walsh
Grand Historian, GLNS

However, we must now move to another phase of development. These floor cloths were no doubt expensive to produce and, on the floor as they were, they quickly became dirty (and unusable without frequent cleaning... by the Tyler?) The Trestle board overcame these difficulties. Notice the 'tools', globes and book resting on the cloth.

While the Scots may have been quite thrifty or at least very careful regarding the Lodge's assets, by taking the form of the Lodge from the flooring and putting onto the wall, they inadvertently changed the nature of Masonic symbolism. You would no longer be standing around the Lodge itself or be part of the Lodge itself but rather looking at the Lodge and all of the emblems emblazoned thereon. This I think is one of the significant leaps away from operative Masonry.

As mentioned before, in 1730, Samuel Pritchard wrote and published his 'Exposure' of Freemasonry entitled 'Masonry Desected' and did us all a great service. It is clear to me that this masonic ritual had been in existence for some time AND that it had been detailed in writing.

The following is a short excerpt from the ritual for the Entered 'Prentice.

Q. What are the Immoveable Jewels?

A. Trasel Board, Rough Ashler, and Broach'd Thurnel.

Q. What are their Uses?

A. Trasel Board for the Master to draw his Designs upon, Rough Ashler for the Fellow-Craft to try their Jewels upon, and the Broach'd Thurnel for the

Entered 'Prentice to learn to work upon.

Lodges in England frequently met in a room in a Pub. With the Drawing, Painting or Cloth our brethren were representing the intrinsic Lodge. When they were standing around it or on it, then they were in the Lodge or at the Lodge as distinct from being members of the Lodge. The earliest floor cloth that I can find a picture of is from 1764; that of the Lurgan Lodge No. 394 of the Grand Lodge of Ireland

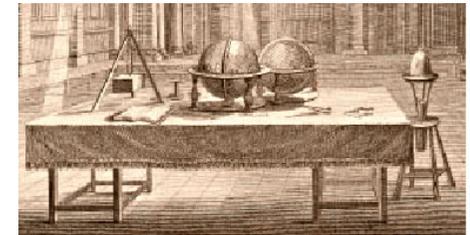


figure 4. Detail from front

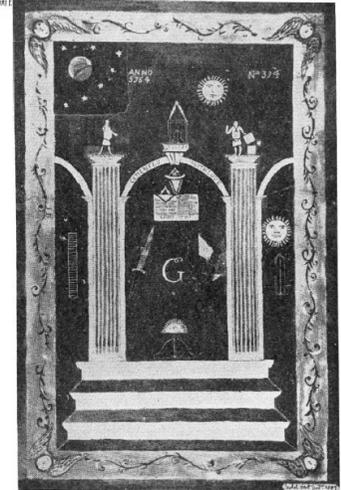


figure 6. Reverse, miniature portrait, 1776.

The next picture shows the reverse side of a miniature portrait of Frances Cornelia, the wife of James Ames, Master of Lodge Innocence and Morality in 1776. The vast majority of information on all three Tracing Boards, save and except the Second Degree stairway, is on the back of this miniature. I also point out that there were no Tracing Boards in existence at the time this miniature was made, in other words it is important to realize that the imagery used in the Tracing Boards was imagery already known and accepted by Masons.

Towards the end of the 18th Century the Tracing Board is developed further as a teaching aid. The Catechisms of the ritual which had by then been developed were long and time consuming