

THE WORKING TOOLS IN THE MASTER MASON DEGREE (Ancient Workings)

By: R.W.Bro. Kenneth Melsted; Published in THE TRACING BOARD, G.R.S, 1966 and 1988.

The Ancient Workings Ritual states The Working Tools of a Master Mason are all the tools in Masonry indiscriminately but more especially the TROWEL

To begin, I will first provide you with the definition of the TROWEL as provided in The Lexicon of Freemasonry by Albert G. Mackey. It is, in part, as follows: An implement of operative Masonry, which has been adapted by speculative Masons, as the peculiar working tool of the Masters Degree. By this implement, and its use in operative Masonry to spread the cement which binds all the parts of the building into one common mass, we are taught to spread the cement of affection and kindness, which unites all the members of the Masonic family, wheresoever dispersed over the globe into one companionship of Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth.

THE TROWEL

The Trowel is an important symbol and working tool in Craft Masonry in many parts of the world, although it has become obsolete in England and in those rituals based on English workings.

However, the Trowel was still being used in England in the 18th Century, when Masonry was being spread abroad, and, perhaps, as a result, American Lodges still use it as the only Working Tool in their Master Masons Degree. An early English book, Preston's Illustrations of Masonry dated 1792, says: The Trowel is mentioned as one of the things presented to the W.M. on his installation. *But when the ritual was revived in 1813 the trowel appears to have been dropped from the English craft Masonry altogether and is now completely obsolete in the system.*

However, in Scotland today (1966) the Trowel is used as the collar jewel of the Junior Deacon, and the Grand Junior Deacon also wears this jewel as part of his regalia. They explain the use of the Trowel this way: The Trowel teaches that nothing can be united without proper cement, and the perfection of the building depends on the suitable disposition of the cement. So Charity, the bond of perfection and social union, must unite separate minds and interests that, like the radii of a circle which extend from the centre to every part of the circumference, the principle of universal benevolence may be diffused to every member of the community.

As it is used by the operative Brother to spread cement which unites the building into one common mass, so the Freemason uses the Trowel emblematically for the noble and glorious purpose of spreading the cement of brotherly love and affection, that cement which unites the members of the fraternity into one sacred band or society of Brothers among whom no contention should ever exist.

However, in the Scandinavian countries, all Masons in Craft Lodges wear the Trowel as a jewel. Entered Apprentices and Fellowcrafts wear a silver Trowel and Master Masons wear a gold Trowel. These countries use two sets of Working Tools, both sets being explained in the First Degree. The first set consists of the square, level, and plumb rule. The second set consists of the Trowel, hammer and compasses. The Trowel is also well known in European Masonry.

In one French working, (if not more) the candidate in the Fellowcraft Degree is made to take five voyages around the Lodge and on each voyage carries a different Working Tool, namely the mallet and chisel, the square and compasses, the rule and crowbar, the level, and on the fifth and last voyage, the Trowel.

In U.S. Lodges, and, in those Canadian Lodges which have taken their ritual and form from the various American states, the Trowel is the only Working Tool used in the Third Degree. To quote Mackey's Encyclopedia: This implement is considered the appropriate Working Tool of a Master Mason, because, in operative Masonry, while the Apprentice is engaged in preparing the rude materials, which require only the gauge and gavel to give them their proper shape, the Fellow Craft places them in their proper position by means of the plumb, level, and square; but the Master Mason alone, having examined their correctness and proved them true and trusty, secures them permanently in their place by spreading, with the Trowel, the cement that irrevocably binds them together.

Robert Macoy, in his book, The Masonic Ritual, informs us that the Trowel is an implement made use of by operative Masons to spread the cement which unites the building into one common mass; but we, as Free and Accepted Masons, are taught to make use of it for the more noble and glorious purpose of spreading the cement of brotherly love and

affection; that cement which unites us into one sacred band, or society of friends and brothers, among whom no contention should ever exist, but that noble contention, or rather emulation, of who best can work, and best agree. This charge, as Macoy gives it, has remained relatively unchanged to this day, and is still used by most American and some Canadian Lodges.

The Trowel has been, and still is, a respected Working Tool in the Craft throughout much of the world and, even though we may not use it ourselves, it may still provide us with much symbolism on which to moralize.

Wayne Anderson, FCF, MPS
Tel: 613-634-3029 (H)
Cel: 613-453-7791
Alle Menschen werden Brueder
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