

Talk by W.Bro J.W.J.Jordan P.Pr.J.G.W.

Aprons and Insignia.

1. **Aprons.** When you first join Freemasonry you are invested with a plain white lambskin apron, to show that you are newly admitted and as a mark of innocence. This is the basis of all Masonic aprons. The apron was originally worn with the flap up: indicating that divine wisdom has not yet penetrated the gross matter of our bodies. Unfortunately, this custom has nearly died out.
2. In the second degree you have two pale blue rosettes, to mark the progress you have made. The flap is worn down to indicate that some wisdom has begun to enter. The 2 rosettes represent the 2 great pillars and they indicate that the triangle is incomplete, showing that a Fellowcraft is not yet a complete Mason and corresponds with the position of the compasses when taking the obligation in the 2nd degree.
3. As a Master Mason, you have three rosettes and a pale blue border, the pale blue is the colour associated with the Virgin Mary. In olden times the aprons were fastened with string like the E.A's and F.C's. In the course of time tassels were added to the strings and then they were separated from the fastenings and added in the form of a ribbon with seven chains. The number 7 was chosen deliberately and has a symbolic meaning: it consists of 3 representing spirit and 4 representing matter: because all matter, God and man consist of spirit and matter.
4. Some say that the 7 chains represent the 7 years that Solomon took in building the temple and some that the 2 ribbons had pictures and names of the 2 great pillars painted on them. The hook and eye "the snake" is one of the oldest and most venerated symbols: it is perhaps the most feared of all the enemies of primitive man, and so stands for evil: yet it is the wisest of all creatures and thus it represents the Divine Wisdom. The serpent biting its tail forming a circle, is regarded as emblem of eternity and therefore the eternal wisdom of God. This present form of apron was adopted soon after the union of the Antients and Moderns in 1813.

5. **Lodge Officers.**

All lodge officers (except the Master) wear pale blue collars with the insignia of their office appended to it. These do not have the central silver stripe, as this is restricted to Past Masters, and the I.P.M

6. **The Master.**

The Master generally wears a fairly ornate collar some of which carry stars and shields bearing the names of previous Masters. At the point it carries the plain square insignia. This is usually only worn in the Masters own lodge and therefore, it's easy to spot a visiting Master as he will wear a masters apron with the "Tee Bars" but no collar.

7. **The I.P.M.**

This is a Lodge Office. He is entitled to the rank of "Immediate Past Master" of the Lodge, because that is what he is. He wears a pale blue collar with the central silver stripe with a square appended at the point. From this square hangs a silver plate with a simile of Euclid's 47th proposition within it.

8. **The Senior Warden.**

The Senior Warden wears a plain pale blue collar, with a representation of an old fashioned level, which, in olden times would have incorporated a lead weight on a string line.

9. **The Junior Warden.**

Wears a similar collar with a Plumb Rule (or Plumb Bob) attached to it.

10. **The Chaplain.**

The Chaplains collar has the symbol of the V.O.S.L. attached to it. The Volume of the Sacred Law must always be open whilst the Lodge is in session. (This need not be the Bible, in some countries it will be the Koran or other Holy Book .) The Chaplains collar jewel is mounted on a triangle surmounting a "Glory", (the Sun.).

11. **The Treasurer.**

The Treasurer has a key (to the cash box) appended to his collar.

12. **The Secretary.**

The Secretary has 2 crossed (in saltire) quill pens (not biros) these are tied together with a ribbon.

13. **The Director of Ceremonies.**

The D.C.'s collar carries two crossed rods (Marshal's batons) tied with ribbon.

14. **The two Deacons.**

Both Deacons collars carry the emblem of a Dove bearing olive branch.

15. **The Almoner.**

The Almoners collar has a representation of a purse with a heart implanted on it.

16. **The Charity Steward.**

The Charity Stewards collar has a trowel for cementing the bond of perfection and social union.

17. **The Organist.**

The Organists jewel depicts the Lyre, which was an ancient Greek musical instrument which was originally made from a turtle shell with strings stretched across it, probably the forerunner of the harp.+

18. **The Assistant Secretary.**

His collar jewel is similar to the Secretary, with the word "assistant" added.

19. **Inner Guard.**

His jewel has two swords in saltire (crossed) pointed downwards.

20. **Stewards.**

All Stewards have the cornucopia (horn of plenty) symbol between the extended legs of the compasses.

21. **Tyler.**

The Tyler or Outer Guard has a single sword pointing down appended to his collar.

22. **Provincial Honours.**

This appears to be a complicated subject for the younger Masons, with "Past Ranks and Active Ranks and Red Aprons. So I will attempt to simplify the whole subject. Firstly, let me point out that Provincial Honours are not given automatically after a Brother has occupied the Masters Chair. Generally some 6-9 years after being a Master (varies in different Provinces) you could be considered for promotion to Provincial Rank by the Provincial Grand Master, and him alone.

He takes into consideration the annual report of the various Lodge Secretaries and the Masters comments as these will show the interest the Brother has taken in Lodge affairs and his attendance at Lodge. All promotions to Provincial Rank, whether Active or Past have equal merit. It is also an incentive for future service to the Lodge.

As there are some 136 Lodges in this Province and about 40 officers that are changed annually, it is obvious that some 96 Brethren are not going to get an "Active" rank but, they will receive the same level of office but in "Past" ranking.

The previous years Acting Junior Warden is usually promoted to Past Senior Grand Warden.

The eight originally (now 14) acting Provincial Grand Stewards are appointed for 1 year as Acting Stewards and the second year as Past Stewards, but to avoid the extra cost of buying the additional regalia, the Provincial Grand Master allows them to wear the Acting regalia for 2 years, giving rise to the erroneous belief that they have a 2 year appointment. They wear the distinctive Red aprons and collars, which date back to 1731 when Grand Lodge decreed that the Grand Master, his Deputy and Wardens should line their aprons with blue silk, and officers of private lodges with white silk and Stewards for the year in Red silk. As they have to be on duty at the Provincial meeting following their appointment it necessarily follows that they must hold the office for a longer period and they generally receive a promotion the following year whereas other Provincial officers usually have to wait a further 7 years.

23. Provincial Grand Officers.

Provincial Officers can wear two types of dress, i.e. Full Dress or Undress. Undress has a 4 inch Garter Blue collar, trimmed with a narrow gold cord and a Garter Blue apron and badge with an ornamental gold cord surround . The badge usually contains the name of the holders home Province, (this could also be London Grand Rank). This mode of dress is usually worn at regular lodge meetings.

The Full Dress collar and apron is decorated with gold frill and lace and used to be reserved for Grand Lodge, Provincial Grand Lodge and Installations. However, due to the present costs of this regalia, some

Brethren choose to purchase Full Dress and wear it at all meetings. You may on occasion, see a Brother wearing a dark blue apron and collar without the gold or blue levels, but instead, with dark blue rosettes. This Provincial award is given to brethren who have not occupied the “Chair” but have served their Lodge with distinction as in the case of an Organist, Treasurer or Secretary.

There are some additional collar jewels for Provincial Grand Lodge Officers that are not seen on private Lodge collars i.e. Provincial Grand Registrar, who wears a scroll with a seal appended. Provincial Grand Sword Bearer who wears two upright crossed swords with a ribbon across the centre. The Provincial Grand Superintendent of Works has a semi-circular protractor. The Provincial Grand Standard Bearer has two crossed banners bearing the coat of arms of Grand Lodge and the Grand Master tied with ribbon. And the Provincial Grand Pursuivant (Inner Guard) has the arms of Grand Lodge with a crossed sword and rod.

24. **Grand Lodge Collars and Jewels.**

Grand Lodge Officers can also wear either “undress or full dress” regalia. The undress collar is 4 inches wide in Garter Blue without any gold cord. The apron has a wider border and belt than Provincial aprons and does not have any gold embellishment but on the white central panel it bears the rank of the wearer surrounded by a wreath of Acacia and corn.

The Full Dress collar is a 4-inch wide Garter Blue edged with gold lace and embroidered with an ear of corn and a sprig of Acacia. The apron is fully embroidered with gold lace and frills with the badge of rank and the Acacia and Ear of Corn wreath.

25. **Chains of Office.**

The chains of office worn by The Most Worshipful Grand Master, Pro Grand Master etc. and down to the Provincial Executive are all taken from the same basic design. They have a series of stars within circular disks connected with a combination of scrollwork and rectangular plates. The rectangular plates contain the initials of the rank of the wearer. The number of stars designate the rank (and I believe correspond to the number of salutes that the holder is entitled to)

The Grand Master and Pro.Grand Master. ***** 11

The Deputy and Assistant Grand Master. ***** 9

The Provincial, District Grand Masters and Grand Wardens ***** 7

The Grand Chaplain, President of the Board of General Purposes, Grand Registrar, Grand secretary, President of the Grand Charity, President of the Masonic Trust for Girls and Boys, President of the R.M.B.I., President of the Masonic Samaritan Fund, Grand Director of Ceremonies, Grand Sword Bearer and Grand Inspectors***** 5
and all other Grand Officers ***** 3.

The Deputy Provincial Grand Masters collar is a series of interwoven links with stars on a circular plate and circular disks bearing the letters – D.P.G.M. (Deputy District G.M. has D.D.G.M.).

The Assistant Provincial (and district) Grand Masters collar has a series of interlinked chains supporting circular discs with the letters A.P.G.M and does not have any stars.

26. **Grand Collar Jewels.**

The Grand Masters' collar supports a pair of compasses extended over an ark of 45° with a segment of a circle at its points and a gold plate included, on which is an eye within a triangle this is on an irradiated glory. The Pro.Grand Master is the same. Past Grand Masters and Past Pro.Grand Masters are similar but without the central gold plate. The Deputy Grand Master has a united square and compasses with a five pointed star in the centre. The Assistant Grand Master only has the extended square and compasses. The Provincial (and District) Grand Masters have the compasses and square with a five-pointed star in the centre surrounded by a double circle with the name of the Province or District engraved thereon. I trust that these few notes and the items that have been displayed, will give you all a little better insight into our regalia. July 2005.