

Mark Masonry in Queensland

With the 75th Year of Mark Masonry as a Sovereign body in Queensland being celebrated in 2006 and with the 26th Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons of Queensland having been installed on Saturday 5th August 2006, it is considered appropriate that an article should be published in the Queensland Freemason to enable all Freemasons to gain a better understanding of the Mark Degree and Mark Masonry in Queensland.

History of Mark Masonry in Queensland

Although we are celebrating our 75th year as the Sovereign body for the Mark Degree in Queensland, Mark Lodges have existed in Queensland from 23rd April 1869.

On 21st January 1863 the Sydney Lodge of Mark Master Masons No. 25 of New South Wales received dispensation from the Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons of England and Wales and the Colonies and Dependencies of the British Crown to enable that Lodge to grant Charters for the foundation of new Mark Lodges.

Mark Master Masons of the Sydney Lodge No.25 New South Wales who resided in Queensland were granted a dispensation on 24th February 1869 to open a Mark Lodge in Brisbane, and on St George's Day 23rd April 1869 St George Mark Lodge No. 103 of the Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons of England and Wales and the Colonies and Dependencies of the British Crown was consecrated under the sponsorship of the Sydney Mark Lodge No.25.

At that time, there was no Provincial Grand Master appointed and as a result the Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of England and Wales and the Colonies and Dependencies of the British Crown appointed R.W. Bro. T.T. Jones of Sydney Mark Lodge to represent him at the dedication ceremony.

On 25th February 1898 the District Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons for Queensland was constituted with R.W. Bro. Harold Courtney Luck being installed as District Grand Master by R.W. Bro. T. T. Jones with R.W. Bro. Barron Lewis Barnett, Past Grand Overseer, officiating and assisting at the Constitution and Installation ceremonies.

R.W. Bro. Harold Courtney Luck served as District Grand Master from 1898 to 1928 a period of 30 years and R.W. Bro. Alexander Corrie was elected District Grand Master and led the Order for four years until the Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons was formed in Queensland.

The Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons of Queensland was formed on 13th August 1932, with M.W. Bro. William Henry Greenfield being installed as first Grand Master by R.W. Bro. Courtney Luck, Past District Grand Master.

It can, therefore, be appreciated that Mark Masonry has been available in Queensland for many years, in fact 137 years, although we are now in 2006 celebrating 75 years as a Sovereign body.

Origins of Mark Masonry

The purpose of this paper is also to provide a brief introduction to Mark Masonry for the brethren of the Craft who may wish to broaden their knowledge of Freemasonry in general and of the Mark Degree in particular.

Before looking at the origins of Mark Masonry we can rest assured that our Order is recognized by the United Grand Lodge Of Queensland as an examination of the Constitutions of the United Grand Lodge of Queensland reveals the following declaration: "Pure and Ancient Freemasonry consists of three degrees and no more, those of Entered Apprentice, the Fellow Craft, and Master Mason and the Grand Lodge recognizes no other degrees save those of the honourable degree of Mark Master Mason and the Supreme Order of the Holy Royal Arch".¹

In tracing the origins of the Mark degree, it is well understood and accepted that the operative mason's

mark was used for purely practical purposes where operative stone masons indented their stone with marks to identify the position and orientation of the stone within the building and also to identify the mason who prepared it, and as most if not all operative masons were illiterate in early times their mark also served as the mason's signature.

Operative stone masonry first appeared as a major trade in the early 11th century with the Saxon builders and intensified over the next two centuries with major castles and churches being built throughout Europe, employing many operative masons. This meant that by the 14th century the trade was required to regulate its customs and practices.

The earliest known document relating to the trade of operative stonemason is the "*Regius Manuscript*" of c 1390. The Manuscript (or Poem) is made up of several sections including the foundations of Masonry, the introduction of Masonry into England, fifteen articles of the "moral duties" of master masons and fifteen points of the "moral duties" of a man of the craft (Apprentice, Fellow and Mason).

The earliest recorded mention of the term "*Mark*" was from the "*Torgau Statutes*" of Germany, where in 1462 it was recorded that a journeyman stonemason took his mark in a solemn ceremony which was followed by an admission feast. 2.

The "*Schaw Statutes*" of 1598 record that a Fellow Craft in Scotland, on his admission into the Fraternity, had his name and his Mark registered by being inserted in a book kept for that purpose together with the date of his reception. 3.

The oldest minute available mentioning a Mark is from the St Mary's Chapel

Lodge in Edinburgh, Scotland where the minute dated 1599 stated that several speculative brethren appended their Marks after their names. This Lodge was obviously a lodge of operative masons who had already embarked upon the practice of admitting non-craft or speculative members.

With regard to the first record of a specific Mark degree being worked, there is in the archives of the Provincial Grand Lodge of Durham, England a copy of the 1728 Book of Constitutions in which a copy of the By-Laws has been affixed. One of these By-Laws dated January 1756 states "There being met part of the body of the Lodge they taking into their serious consideration that no member of the saide Lodge shall be made a Mark Mason without paying the fee of one Scots Mark....." 4

A speculative Mark degree was first recorded as being worked in the Royal Arch Chapter No. 257 in Portsmouth, England on 1 September 1769 when several brethren were made Mark Masons and Mark Masters. The earlier working of the Mark Man and Mark Master ceremonies were performed as two distinct degrees, as opposed to the present practice of the Mark Man forming no more than an introductory phase to the Mark Master degree, with the Mark Man degree being conferred upon Fellow Crafts and the Mark Master degree being conferred upon Master Masons.

It is documented that early Mark degrees were closely associated with the Royal Arch but many scholars believe it was a relevant part of the Craft system as the teaching of the degree was largely an amplification of the Second degree. In Scotland, the Craft Lodges still have the power to confer the Mark degree and many still do. However, as the Mark degree is also an essential qualification in Scotland for the Excellent Master degree, Scottish Royal Arch Chapters also have the right to confer the Mark degree in the event of a candidate not as yet having taken it in their Craft Lodge.

It is also evident that the Mark degree was worked in Craft Lodges and Royal Arch Chapters in England as far back as documentary evidence goes, i.e. back to 1756, and that this was the case until 1813.

Relationship between the Craft and the Mark

As in Scotland, Mark Masonry was originally practiced in England within the structure of the Craft Lodge, and this is evidenced by the Lodge of Hope at Bradford that conferred the Mark degree under the constitution of a body called the "Grand Lodge of All England", held at York which was formed in 1725 and existed into the 1790s.

The Union of the two Grand Lodges, the Premier Grand Lodge ("Moderns") and another Grand Lodge ("Ancients") which had been formed in 1751, occurred in 1813 with the Duke of Sussex being installed as Grand Master, a position he held until his death in 1843. 5

The newly formed Grand Lodge did not approve of degrees other than the first three degrees of the Craft, and those of the Royal Arch. However, after 1813, the Mark degree continued to grow in popularity and was worked "unofficially" in "irregular" and independent Craft Lodges and Royal Arch Chapters although this was a most unsatisfactory state of affairs. The period between 1813 and 1843 was a very intriguing, indeed a period that involved encounters with the Grand Royal Arch Chapter of Scotland no less.

After the death of the Duke of Sussex in 1843, some London freemasons became involved in the Bon Accord Chapter at Aberdeen in Scotland that worked a Mark Masonry ceremony as well as those of the Royal Arch, and in 1851 the Bon Accord Chapter of Aberdeen issued a Mark Charter to some of its London members, permitting them to meet in London and work the Mark degree.

By 1855 senior freemasons were involved in the Bon Accord Mark Lodge of London and sought that the Mark degree should be considered as part of ordinary Freemasonry.

This led to a resolution to include the Mark degree as an integral part of English Freemasonry and this appeared in the minutes of the Quarterly Communications of the Grand Lodge in March 1856. Astonishingly this minute was not confirmed at the next Quarterly Communication in June 1856, and it is suggested by most authors that this was done to enable the Mark to emerge in control of its own destiny. The fact that the Grand Lodge of Mark Master

Masons was formed on 23 June 1856, only 19 days after the minute failed to be confirmed in the Craft Grand Lodge's Communications is strong evidence of this suggestion. 6

Mark Ritual

The ceremony of Advancement (as the ceremony of admission to the Mark degree is called) is longer in content than the Third degree of the Craft and centers on the traditional practice of choosing and using a distinguishing mark to identify each craftsman's work, to enable him to receive the wages that are due.

The newly "advanced" Brother learns that the themes of the Mark degree include regularity, diligence and discipline. We know that the "Fellowcraft" degree of Craft Freemasonry encourages learning, but the Mark degree instructs the candidate how that learning can be most usefully and judiciously employed for his own honour and the benefit of our fellow man.

Those candidates who elect to be "advanced" quickly learn that the Mark degree is a wonderful ceremony containing some elements of drama and even humour, but above all containing strong moral lessons.

It has also been recognized, not only by Mark Master Masons, that "certain parts of the Ritual contains some of the most impressive soliloquies to be found in masonry." 7

Mark Regalia

The members of the Bon Accord Mark Lodge, London, were the first to adopt a special Mark Mason apron which they modified from the standard Masonic apron, and trimmed with maroon and blue with maroon rosettes. It is this apron that is worn today by Mark Master Masons throughout the world. The Mark Master Mason also wears a breast jewel in the form of a keystone suspended from a maroon and blue ribbon. The Installed Mark Master's Apron is likewise similar to a Craft Installed Master, but in maroon and blue with the three silver levels (Taus) instead of rosettes. The Mark Lodges also have a special coin, known as a Mark "Penny" which is given to candidates, on their advancement, for the payment of wages.

The Mark Lodge room is similar to that of the first three degrees with the

additional positions adjacent to the “pavement” for three officers known as the Junior, Senior and Master Overseers respectively.

Qualification

To become a Mark Mason in Queensland you must first be a Master Mason of the Queensland Constitution, or of a constitution recognized by the United Grand Lodge of Queensland.

The minimum interval between the Craft Third degree and joining Mark Masonry in Queensland is 12 months.

Entry into the Mark degree is not automatic – any brother seeking to become a member must be proposed and seconded by two brethren preferably but not necessarily members of the Lodge he seeks to join.

To be an Installed Master in the Mark degree requires the candidate to be an Installed Master in a Craft Lodge, unless special dispensation is granted.

Why Should a Craft Mason Consider to be a Mark Mason?

Many reasons have been advanced in response to this question and some have already been alluded to above, but three reasons are of particular importance. Firstly, the Mark degree affords opportunities for the Craft Mason to enhance his knowledge of Craft Masonry. Secondly, the lessons learned in the Mark degree have practical application about life. 8

In amplifying the first reason: there are many terms and phrases, even Biblical characters, introduced in the Craft that remain a mystery to many brethren. For example, what does the Senior Warden mean, at the closing of the Lodge, by the expression “.....having seen that every Brother has had his due”? This is but one of the many peculiarities of the Craft that become much clearer in the Mark.

The second reason is that the Mark degree is not only a true craftsman degree but it also teaches invaluable lessons about life. For example: “Skilled work, carried out truly and faithfully, even though at first it is not understood or appreciated by others, is eventually rewarded, even though the reward may be slow in coming.” Such lessons are taught to the craftsman in a dramatic way during the Mark degree ceremony. He is, of course, to apply them, not only to the immediate task of symbolically building the Temple, but in the way he

should conduct himself through life. Our Mason’s mark is our signature. It represents our name, our character, our integrity and our skills. When we sign our name or apply our Mark to our work we stand up to be counted. By it we say – “This is where I stand, this is my work. I guarantee its quality and I am proud of the workmanship that it shows.” 9

Conclusion

The Mark is universally recognized as a truly friendly degree and you may now be asking “How does one join?” or “How does one find out more?”

In the Masonic Directory you will find Mark Lodges together with the Secretaries’ names and addresses listed under the Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons. Any of these Secretaries would be pleased to assist you and put you in contact with Mark Master masons in your area. You may also contact the Grand Secretary whose details are also listed in the Directory.

You may be asking: “What does it cost?” Membership fees are reasonable, generally lower than Craft Lodge fees. You will also require a Mark apron. A new one costs less than a Craft apron, but good second hand aprons are sometimes available at very moderate costs.

The Mark is known as “the friendly degree” and to continue with this “friendliness” every Mark Master Mason is inviting **YOU** to join this very pleasant Order, and is waiting to extend a warm welcome to you.

Acknowledgements:

1. *Constitutions of United Grand Lodge of Queensland*
2. *The Masons Mark – By Wallace M. Gage, The Maine Lodge of Research, May 2003*
3. *Masons’ and Freemasons’ Marks – Grand Lodge of British Columbia and Yukon – April 2004.*
4. *About Mark Masonry – B A Vickers, Provincial Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons of Hertfordshire*
5. *Introduction to Mark Masonry – M F Barnes, Provincial Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons of Surrey*
6. *Introduction to Mark Masonry – M F Barnes, Provincial Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons of Surrey*
7. *About Mark Masonry – B A Vickers, Provincial Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons of Hertfordshire*
8. *Introduction to Mark Masonry – M F Barnes, Provincial Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons of Surrey*
9. *Higher Degrees Handbook – JSM Ward*