

- The Fourth Regular Step -

The Book of Constitutions presented at your Initiation states that Pure and Antient Masonry consists of Three Degrees and no more. This is a somewhat strange statement bearing in mind that prior to the union of the Two Grand Lodges in 1813, a form of the Mark Degree was extensively worked in both London and the Provinces. Indeed there is clear evidence that the Degree was worked in 1723. There exists a document in the Provincial Grand Lodge of Durham, the last page of which is dated 1756 which reads 'There being met part of the Body of the Lodge, the taking in their serious consideration that no member of the saide Lodge shall be a Mark Master Mason without paying the fee of one Scots Mark'.

Nevertheless in England, the Mark degree (often known as the friendly degree) is a separate entity with its own Grand Lodge, which was founded on June 23rd 1856. In Scotland and many other countries the Mark Degree is part of either Craft or Royal Arch Masonry where the candidate is given the Mark Degree as soon as he becomes a Fellowcraft.

The Mark Degree is one of hope and encouragement. The ritual is built on a single verse from Psalm 118 "The stone which the builders rejected has become the headstone of the corner". It deals with the building of King Solomon's Temple, and the various Craftsmen employed in that great undertaking but its real message is one of contemplation of human strength and weakness.

The Degree contains many messages for the disconcerting man. It illustrates that the wisest of men can be mistaken, that experts can be wrong, that the weakest often display perseverance far better than the strongest, that the insignificant has potential for distinction and that we all have a part to play in the Building of Life. It is for each to put his own interpretation on the message, which this Degree proclaims. There is clear encouragement that no man is beyond redemption, and the possibility of distinction is always within our power. Whatever ones Religion there is a clear message of hope for the believer.

Finally, the Degree reminds us that when all the wisest and cleverest of men were gathered together, only one looked towards the West and saw a sunbeam strike the roof of the Temple. The Degree represents the everyday life of each of us, for the stone hewn from the virgin rock depicts us all on our journey through life, and its final recognition as perfection, should be the guide to our conduct through life that "we may be found worthy".

The purpose of this letter is to draw your attention to the existence of the Mark Degree and to invite you to seriously consider 'taking the fourth regular step'. There are many senior members of the Craft who are also proud to be "Mark Men", and who enjoy the friendship of this wonderful Degree.

The Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master Bro. Anthony Walton, his Deputy and Assistant Provincial Grand Masters lead by example. Their welcome is most cordial and sincere which adds to the pleasure of being a Mark Master Mason.

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There are 3 Mark Master Masons' Lodges meeting within the Lancaster and District Group:

The oldest is the Garnett Lodge of Mark Master Masons No 146 founded in 1872 and meeting at Lancaster Masonic Hall on the last Monday in January, March, September. Morecambe Lodge of M.M.M's No 716, which meets at Morecambe Masonic Hall on the second Monday in February, April, October and December and Scorton Lodge of M.M.M., which meets at Garstang Masonic Hall on Second Tuesday in February, March, October and November.

If you desirous of knowing who completed the building of King Solomon's Temple after the death of Hiram, why not take the fourth regular step and join us - The Secretaries names and addresses of the above Lodges can be found in the West Lancashire Masonic Yearbook, copies of which are held by your Lodge Secretary.

W.Bro. Peter Mason, P.G.J.D.
Garnett Lodge of M.M.M.