

***Provincial Grand Lodge of Mark
Master Masons of Worcestershire***



Maintaining the Standard

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Maintaining the Standard

Introduction

This document has been produced at the request of the Provincial Grand Master to ensure that the Province of Worcestershire maintains a high level of Ritual and associated procedures in both the Mark and Royal Ark Mariner Degrees.

Worcestershire, as a Province is held in high esteem by Grand Lodge and testimony to this was demonstrated at the meeting of Provincial Grand Lodge on June 8th 2019 and the reception it received from numerous distinguished visitors.

With the foregoing in mind the Provincial Grand Master is anxious to maintain the standards within individual Lodges and has approved the following guidelines.

Overview

The Mark Degree

Within the Mark Ritual No 1 in the Preface Section there is detailed information which is probably never looked at by the Brethren as they are concentrating on learning the Ritual of their respective offices, which is quite understandable. Therefore I have used some of the material in this section to illustrate what the Prov.G.M is seeking to achieve.

The perhaps 'over quoted' expression that the Mark is the 'friendly degree' is interpreted by some to mean there is a relaxation in the way our ceremonies are performed and the Ritual delivered. Nothing could be further from the truth! The ceremony of Advancement, when delivered correctly, is a joy to watch and take part in, but this does require effort on behalf of the Lodge Officers to ensure this happens. Rehearsals are absolutely essential in any degree and it is accepted that modern working lives and domestic dynamics play a key part in overall time management.

The management of rehearsals should be under the direct control of the Lodge DC and the use of Ritual Books is discouraged in open Lodge. It is accepted that not all Brethren can learn, retain and deliver Ritual and in these cases, discreet reference can be made, but not as is sometimes seen - numerous sheets of A4 paper being used with a huge typeface!

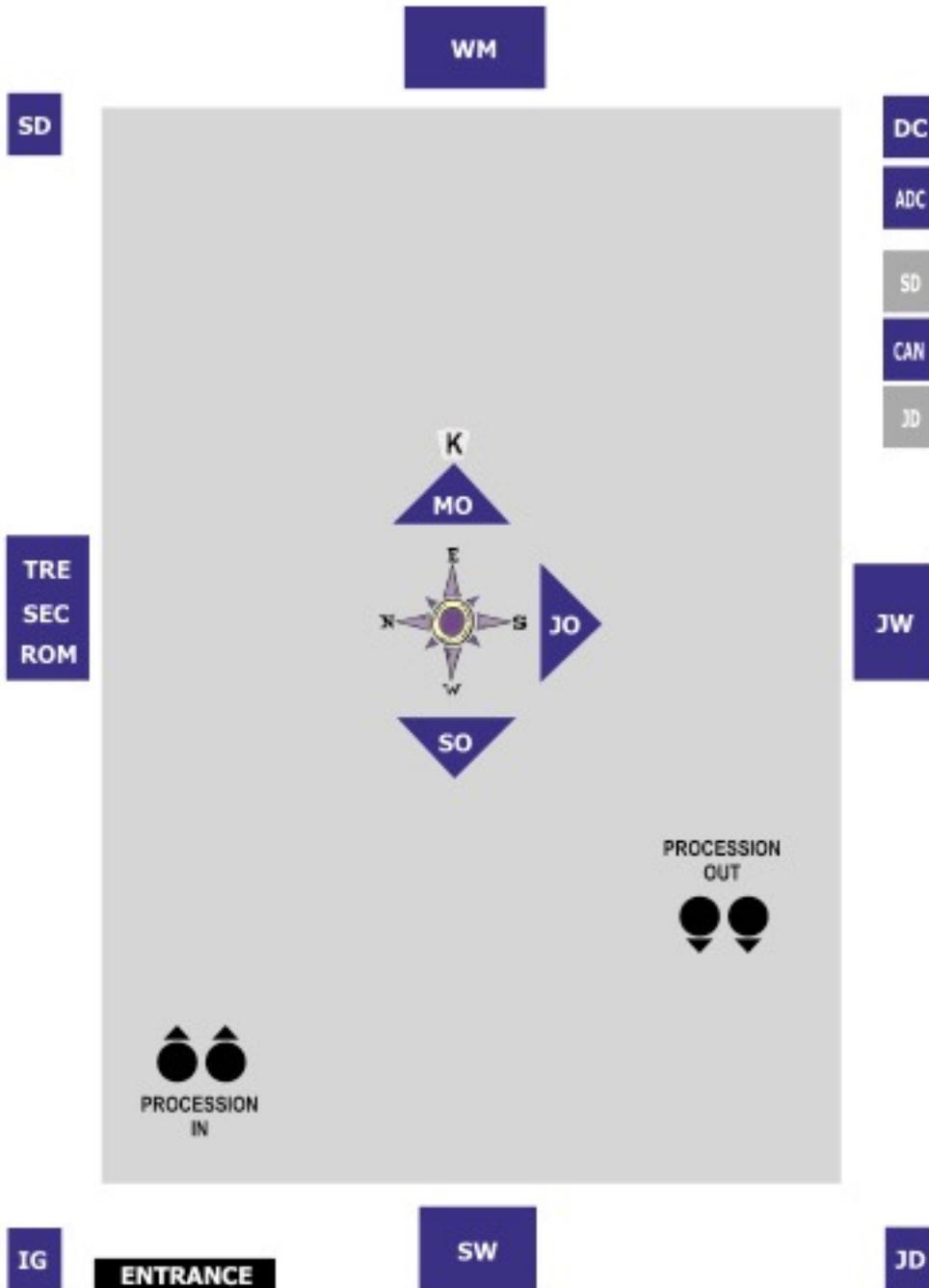
This guide is therefore intended to concentrate on various aspects of Ceremonial procedure that do not appear in the ritual. It must be emphasised that this booklet is not a directive but a guide to help all Brethren whatever office they hold..

The Lodge Room

In the Mark Ritual No 1 the Form of the Lodge, the Furniture of the Lodge and all ancillary equipment are fully described on Pages 4 and 5. On page 8 a graphical representation of the Lodge Room is also shown. All Brethren should have a copy of this book as in most cases, it is presented to them following the Ceremony of Advancement. It is however important to ensure that the latest version is used.

The Form of Mark Lodge is shown below, there may however be some variations for individual Lodge Rooms as well as the positioning of the Overseers.

The Form of a Mark Lodge



Some Nuances

The position of the Overseers is traditionally in the centre of the Lodge Room and should remain so wherever possible for the Ceremony of Advancement to ensure full access to the 'wickets'.

In respect of Installation Ceremonies, particularly for the smaller Lodge Rooms in the Province the Overseers should be placed in front of the Senior Warden's pedestal. This recommendation was made a number of years ago. The 'wickets' must remain visible at all times as the Provincial Grand Senior Warden refers to them in his address to the Lodge Wardens in the Ceremony of Installation.

The Lodge Officers

A full listing of a complete set of Lodge Officers is shown on Page 9 of Mark Ritual No 1

The Principal Officers

The traditional 'Principal Officers' generally referred to are the W.M./S.W./J.W./M.O./S.O. and J.O. This in reality empowers them to ballot on all key issues, but other Brethren can vote if they so wish, particularly if a Candidate is being balloted for. It would be normal for the Proposer and Secunder to vote also.

I now wish to focus on the Lodge Officers who play important roles in the Ceremony of Advancement and the Installation Ceremony.

Worshipful Master

The WM, by virtue of his position, should be fully conversant with every aspect of the Degree, even if he is 'in the chair' for the first time. This will include the opening and closing of the Lodge, the Ceremony of Advancement and the Installation Ceremony.

The opening and closing of Lodge should not be an issue as the WM should have filled, with occasional exceptions every office prior to the achieving the Chair of Adoniram. The Ceremony of Advancement, in many Lodges is now divided up between the Brethren. These tend to be the Signs and Secrets, the Working Tools, and in some instances the last section of the ceremony which begins, 'In conclusion...'. If properly rehearsed, this takes some of the pressure off the W.M. and in the case of the Working Tools gives some of the younger Brethren a chance to take part in the Ceremony. In many Lodges, the Signs and Secrets are assigned to an experienced Past Master.

Senior Warden

The Senior Warden or equivalent in many other degrees is in fact 'the year in waiting', but the Senior Warden does have his own responsibilities in respect of the Ceremony of Advancement, which are all included in the Mark No 1 Ritual. The highlights for him are:

1. Denouncing the Candidate as an imposter which should be done with some drama!
2. Investing the Candidate as a Mark Master Mason which should be carried out with sincerity and feeling, and as an observation, the investiture of the M.M.M. should be carried out by the S.W. on the actual floor of the Lodge and not from his Chair, but adjacent to it.

Junior Warden

The Junior Warden, like the Senior Warden, has a very important role in the Ceremony of Advancement and should be carried out with a similar degree of drama, to drive the message home to the Candidate. The interplay between the Wardens can turn an average Ceremony into a great one!

The Overseers

The Overseers play a critical part in the Ceremony of Advancement in respect of approving and rejecting the stone which the candidate presents to them. This really is an office where no Ritual Book should ever be allowed! The work by the Overseers should be very precise and some Lodges differ in how they inspect the stone but they must be consistent, i.e. the actions particularly should be the same at each pedestal, carry out the inspection process and then speak. As we all know there are many variations on this part of the Ceremony, and this is where the D.C., during rehearsals should try and achieve consistency. The Overseers play no part in the Installa-

tion Ceremonies but should immediately vacate their seats before the Inner Workings commence. It is the responsibility of the D.C. to action this.

Senior Deacon

Although not a 'principal officer' in respect of Lodge seniority, the Senior Deacon is pivotal to the Ceremony of Advancement as he is in charge of the Candidate until the WM says: ***You are now at liberty to take your seat in a Lodge of Mark Master Masons etc.*** The Senior Deacon, like the W.M. should have a thorough working knowledge of the Ceremony of Advancement as he is often alone with the Candidate and may be out of earshot for any prompt that may be required. This is one office where reading a ritual book would be totally inappropriate!

Junior Deacon

Whilst a non-speaking part, the Junior Deacon should be as familiar with the Ceremony of Advancement as the Senior Deacon as they are together virtually all of the time. In the natural progression of the offices, this year's Junior Deacon could in all probability be next year's Senior Deacon so this is a so a good apprenticeship for him!

Inner Guard

The Inner Guard, in both the opening and closing of the Lodge, and the Installation Ceremony only has a small part to play. His response to the Junior Warden and the WM needs to be audible, and clear and this can often set the tone of the meeting.

Director of Ceremonies

The D.C. is a quite literally 'the Man for all Seasons' and should have a thorough working knowledge of all aspects of the ceremonies, general procedures, protocol, lodge etiquette, salutations and of course the Festive Board. He should, unless otherwise agreed, be the main prompter. However, with some of the larger Lodge rooms, a prompter for the Overseers and Wardens should also be considered. There is nothing dignified about a Past Master sat in the North West or the North East bawling a prompt out for the Senior Warden at the other end of the Lodge room! Overall, it is the DC's responsibility to organise the prompts well in advance of the meeting.

Preparation for a Lodge Meeting

An early arrival at Lodge Meetings is essential. The D.C. should endeavour to arrive at least half an hour before the start.

Before the Lodge Meeting, the DC should check that everything required for the Ceremony is available and in its proper place. Although this is primarily the duty of the Tyler, the D.C. should check everything himself.

- Volume of the Sacred Law, Mallet and Chisel (for VSL)
- Constitutions & Regulations
- Glass of water for Worshipful Master
- Tracing Board
- Mark Token (For payment of wages)
- Apron & Jewel for use in the ceremony
- Kneeling Stools

- Ballot Box and Balls
- Collection Bags/Boxes
- Candles
- Warrant
- Gavels
- Working Plans
- Mallet and Chisel (For Inner Guard)
- Officers' Collars
- Wands and Stands
- Ashlars and Keystone

In addition to the above, the Master's pedestal should have a working plan showing a Keystone. The Senior Warden's pedestal should have two wickets in a vertical position, each having a hole for the insertion of a hand. The column, level, tripod or perfect ashlar used in a craft Lodge, should not be on the pedestal.

The Junior Warden's pedestal should have an axe placed on top (No column, plumb rule or rough ashlar to be placed on the pedestal). On top of each of the three Overseers' pedestals should be laid a mallet and a square, together with a working plan showing a square and oblong ashlar.

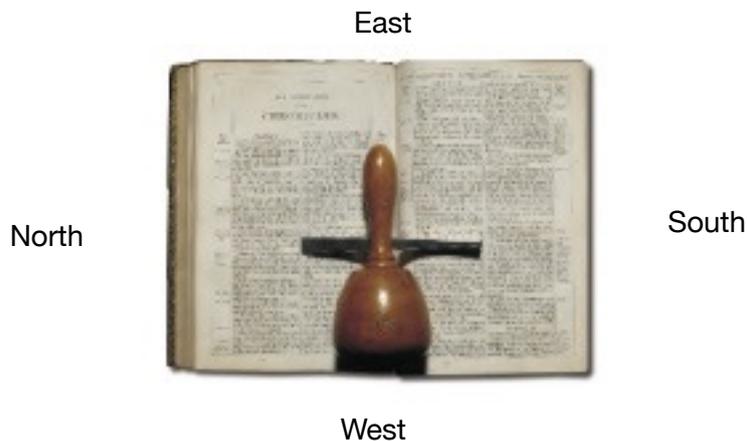
It is the duty of the DC to ensure the Brethren, particularly visitors, are aware of the Fire escapes and Assembly Points in the event of evacuation.

Lodge Furniture

Volume of the Sacred Law

The Sacred Volume should be marked in order that it can be opened to the right page of Second Book of Chronicles, Chapter 2 so that the candidate may read it.

It is important that the working tools are placed thereon correctly, ie chisel with the hilt to the South, beneath and at right angles to the Mallet, which should have the handle to towards the Master.



Candles

The candle at the Master and Wardens pedestals are lit before the Lodge is open.

Stones and Working Aprons

A square ashlar for use by the Senior Deacon, an oblong ashlar for use by the Junior Deacon and a Keystone for use by the Candidate, should be provided outside the door of the Lodge together with three large working aprons.

Marks

A choice of two or three Marks for each Candidate should be prepared in advance and located at the secretary's table for the Registrar of Marks to show to the Candidate. Each mark is constructed by straight lines but must not incorporate a triangle. It is common that the candidate's initials are used, employing the cipher of the Masonic alphabet. (See Part 9 of Mark Ritual No. 1)

Masonic Dress

It is the D.C.'s responsibility to ensure that the Brethren are properly attired. Generally this would include a white shirt, or a pastel shade with white collar and cuffs with the appropriate Mark tie (or bow tie), black shoes and preferably dark socks.

Jewels

The only Jewels that are permitted to be worn in a Mark Lodge are those appertaining to the Mark and the Ancient and Honourable Fraternity of Royal Ark Mariners (including Past Commander's Jewel and collarettes for RAM Grand Rank and Provincial RAM Grand Rank) The Mark jewel is worn nearest the centre of the body with others to the left.

Collars

It is customary for a Grand Officer, Provincial/District Grand Officer or Past Master, to wear the apron of his rank and a collar bearing the jewel of his rank. If such a Brother holds an Office in his Lodge he will, when attending that Lodge, wear only one collar, i.e. his Lodge Officer's collar bearing the jewel of his office.

It is permissible to wear two collars at Installation Meetings when the Lodge collar will be removed prior to the Installation ceremony. An active Grand Officer should remove his chain before being invested as a Lodge Officer. A collar must never be placed over a chain. Masters of other Lodges should not wear their Master's collar.

Candidates

A Mark apron and Jewel for each candidate are placed at the pedestal of the Senior Warden. The apron(s) having been adjusted to fit the candidate(s), before the Meeting.

The candidate must wear a Craft Master Mason's apron, not Past Master's apron. One should be provided in the ante-room, in case the candidate does not bring his own.

Signs

Using the correct signs of the degree can sometimes present a problem, especially to those Brethren who attend Lodge infrequently or who are relatively new to the Degree. It is important that the D.C. always sets the standard with the signs of the Degree.

The correct sign is clearly explained in the Ceremony of Advancement. The step described therein is taken before giving any signs except for the sign of Reverence.

An endeavour should be made to encourage all Brethren to give the sign together, taking the time from the Lodge D.C. When giving the sign, Brethren should give it smartly.

Sign of Reverence

The sign of Reverence is given with the right hand over the region of the heart, with the thumb close to the index finger. This sign should be shown during all Prayers. The Chaplain reads the prayers and Holy Writ, with a small bible in the palm of an open hand or from a lectern when available.

Sign of Fidelity

The sign of Fidelity is given with the right hand placed over the region of the heart with the thumb at right angles to the index finger.

Ceremony of Advancement: Ritual No. 1

The overall task of the Director of Ceremonies is to maintain the correct procedure for the Advancement Ceremony, as published in the latest edition of Ritual No. 1, to see that the ceremonies are carried out with propriety and decorum at all times; without being too officious and if anything does need attention, to see to it as unobtrusively as possible.

Where more than one candidate is to be advanced, it is strongly recommended that each candidate should be taken separately for the first part of the Ceremony; in particular for the examination of materials, for the rejection of the Keystone, for the payment of wages and discovery of the impostor and the finding of the Keystone.

The second candidate should remain in the care of the Tyler until the first candidate has recovered the Keystone. The Ceremony up to that point will then be repeated for the second candidate. Both candidates will then be entrusted with the signs, grips and words with the Junior Deacon taking charge of the second candidate.

The heaving over of the Keystone and the search and recovery of it by the candidate, is meant to be symbolic. Care should be taken that embellishments are not introduced.

Installation Meetings

The Installation Meeting is not only the highlight of the Lodge year but one in which the D.C. is most heavily involved. It requires a great deal of preparation and organisation.

The Master Elect and the Installing Master will both look to the D.C. for assistance and the benefit of his experience at such meetings. A pre-prepared typed set of "Master's Notes" to be read in accompaniment with the published Summons will prove invaluable to the Master. For example, a note that details the names of the Installed Masters who will be occupying the Wardens' Chairs and the Inner Guard for the Inner Working.

The installing Master should have been given a copy of the latest version of Mark Ritual No. 2 (Inner Workings) issued by the Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons to present to the newly installed Worshipful Master. This will give the new Master sufficient time to learn and deliver the Installation Ceremony of his own successor.

It is quite in order for the Worshipful Master (seated) to thank the Officers of his year, from their present seated positions, rather than inviting them to line up in the North in order of seniority. This not only saves time but it is much more orderly. Those Officers should leave their collars on the backs of their chairs.

The Installing Master will invite Past Masters to occupy the Wardens' Chairs and to undertake the office of Inner Guard during the Inner Workings during the installation of the new Master. The Wardens and Inner Guard of the year, remove their collars and place them on the backs of their chairs and the two Wardens of the year proffer their gavels to the Past Masters taking their chairs for the Inner Workings before being conducted to seats elsewhere.

If one of the Wardens is the Master Elect, he should be seated just West of the A.D.C.

Other officers, sometimes without invitation, continue to discharge their duties. The latest Mark Ritual No 2, gives clear and concise guidance for the shortened form of Installation of a Master, who is already an Installed Master (Induction), and the Proclamation of a Master who is to continue in Office for a second year. In the event of a Proclamation the escorting Provincial D.C. normally assumes responsibility for this part of the Ceremony.

It is advantageous to enlist the help of a second ADC during the investiture of Officers for the ensuing year. The Provincial DC will always assist with this, if asked. This will save time and ensure a smooth continuous investiture. The DC will ask the Master whom he appoints to each office, from a point just East of the Master Overseer's pedestal.

If a Dispensation is to be read, ensure that it is done and at the correct time. The D.C. does not salute as he has a wand in his hand, a court bow will suffice.

Installation Nuances-Worcestershire Workings

Worcestershire as a Province is probably unique across most of the major orders in Freemasonry in respect of Installation meetings, inasmuch, that in most cases the Rulers and senior active members of the Province will be in attendance. The Mark Degree is no exception to this and at all Installation meetings a Ruler, Provincial Wardens and a Provincial D.C. will be in attendance. All play an active part in the Installation meetings and they are there to facilitate and assist wherever possible and to observe, as there may be a future Provincial Grand Master within the assembled Brethren!

In conclusion, excuse the pun; use this booklet as a guide. and its content is not intended to be yet another Book of Ritual.