

ISSUE 35 THE WORKING TOOLS OF A MARK MASTER MASON

We all know, I hope, that the working tools of a Mark Master Mason are the Mallet and Chisel. In the Craft degree we are familiar with the Common Gavel and the Chisel. In both Orders we are also reminded of the 'moral advantages of discipline and education', and as Mark Masons we are taught to understand that the benefit of discipline and education is to teach us, that by the correction of irregularities and the subjugation of our passions, we may be found worthy to receive the approving mark of the Great Overseer of the Universe.

But what is the difference between the Mallet as described in the Mark Degree, and the Common Gavel and Maul of Craft Masonry. The Common Gavel is a small light tool used to hew the rough edges from the stones before being taken to the building site, whereas the Maul is a heavy wooden tool designed to be used at the actual building. It is used to align each stone into its proper place with the other stones. Some believe that the Common Gavel and the Mallet from Mark Masonry are the same, but they are not. As we learn in our early Masonic career the Common Gavel in Craft Masonry has a sharp end and is used to 'Knock off all superfluous knobs and excrescences.' The Mallet used in Mark Masonry has a rounded end and is a smaller version of the Maul. It is used in conjunction with the Chisel to dress the stone. In our ritual it is used by the Worshipful Master to indent the triangle around the newly chosen Mark of the Candidate. To be more specific the Common Gavel has a cylindrical head with the handle in the middle and is used by the Master and Wardens to preserve order in the Lodge. This use of 'keeping order' the gavel is also used by Judges, Auctioneers, City of London Guilds, etc. Some of these institutions go back hundreds of years. The Gavel has long been traditionally used for keeping order at organised meetings in many institutions.

For the Stonemason the use of the Mallet and Chisel is explained in the Tracing Board Lecture.

The Mallet is used practically to knock off superfluous excrescences and morally teaches us to correct irregularities, to maintain a quiet demeanour in the school of discipline, and to learn to be content. What the Mallet is to the workman, enlightened reason is to the speculative Mason. It curbs ambition, teaches us to restrain envy, to moderate anger and to encourage harmony and Brotherly love.

The Chisel is emblematic of discipline and education. The mind in its natural state is rude and unpolished as the rough ashlar; and as the effect of the chisel on the external surface of the latter is to expose its hidden beauties, so education brings out the latent virtues of the mind, thereby displaying the perfection of human knowledge – our duty to God and man.

The Mallet and Chisel were used by the workman to place his Mark on each stone he completed before it was sent to the Temple so that his work was recognised, and his wages paid accordingly.

Much confusion exists as to the difference between Masonic Gavels, Mallets and Mauls. The medieval stonemasons used metal gavels or axes to break, hew and shape the rough stone before using wooden mallets and chisels to finish and perfectly smooth them. They were then fitted into their place in the intended structure with the use of heavy setting mauls. These mauls were a large handle with a padded end and were used to knock the stones into position without causing damage.

Next time you're sat at the Worshipful Masters Pedestal or one of the Wardens, think, 'is this a Gavel, a Maul or a Mallet I am about to use. The Worshipful Master in the Mark degree would possibly have a Mallet on the VSL and a Gavel to preserve order or gain attention.

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