



PROVINCIAL GRAND LODGE OF DEVONSHIRE

Explanation of the First Degree

Initiation of an Entered Apprentice

The Ceremony of your Initiation may be a bit of a blur and probably confusing. This is not uncommon, the purpose of this note is to start to help you to understand the meaning and symbolism of the Ceremony. Remember you are not alone if you have a question please ask another Brother, your Proposer or Mentor.

Introduction

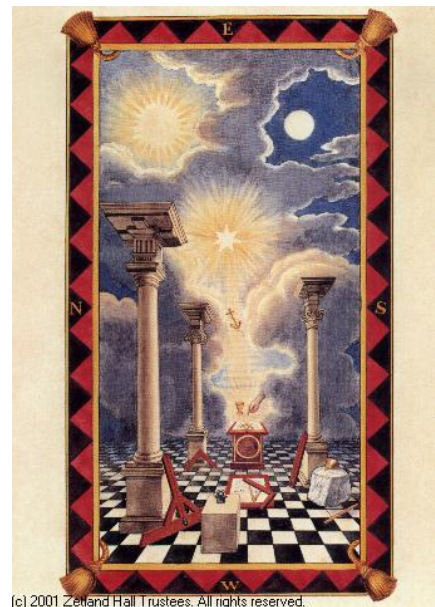
Whilst the friendships made are extremely important and not to be underestimated in any way, the key to enjoying your Freemasonry to the full lies in understanding it.

However, in coming to understand the meaning of our Ceremonies, we have a problem, for different Brethren will interpret them in different ways.

What is more, none of them will be wrong. This is one of the joys of Freemasonry there are many minor variations in ceremonies and this is one of the joys, it is not always the same and the interpretations may be different.

Over a period of time, the ritual you see, hear and learn, will prompt you to think about it more widely and more deeply.

This will lead you to consider the one constant that should be in our minds – How can we improve ourselves as building blocks for the Temple we are contemplating?



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This is a challenging concept for anyone who has just been initiated and gone through a Ceremony that may be viewed on the evening of their Initiation as confusing, perhaps somewhat bizarre and more than likely a little nerve wracking!

What happened at your initiation

It is important that you understand the symbolism of your initiation, and this is explained in general terms below. Your ceremony of Initiation may appear to be different to those in other Devonshire Lodges and wider afield, however we all operate under a warrant of the United Grand Lodge of England (UGLE). As such, all ceremonies are based upon the same basic story and symbolism although their words may differ, and the sequence of the various parts may change, the fundamental message is always the same.

Your entry into the Lodge

The First Degree Ceremony represents birth, or the birth of knowledge. When we first enter Freemasonry, we are without the hidden knowledge of the Craft and rely on the help and guidance of others, our Sponsors, Mentors and indeed any other Brother, until we reach that maturity in the Craft when we in turn can extend help to others.

The hood wink [blindfold] you wore, represented the darkness associated with the lack of knowledge and Masonic Education and also enables the candidate to be led from the Lodge Room without seeing it, if he refuses to continue with the Ceremony.

The cable tow [noose] is an old emblem of a servant being bonded to his Master. In a Freemason's Lodge, it symbolises our bondage to ignorance until we are brought to the light of knowledge of the Volume of The Sacred Law. (In our Lodges this is usually the Bible but could be the sacred Book of another Religion held by the Candidate, such as the Koran etc).

The left breast is made bare so that the points of both the *poignard/sword* and the compasses can be felt next to the heart. Also, some believe, to prove that the Candidate is not female. You may remember that just before you entered the Lodge Room you were confronted with the challenge, --- "Do you feel anything?" This symbolic challenge was designed to intimate to you that you were about to engage in something serious and solemn.

You were divested of all metallic objects, so that you could not bring any offensive weapons into the Lodge to disturb its harmony.

You were slip shod [no heels on your shoes] to emphasise your poverty and your knee was made bare so that there was nothing between it and the Earth when the Obligation was taken.

The *trouser leg* is also *rolled up* to demonstrate the Candidate is a free man, bearing no marks of a leg iron i.e., he is free.

Inside the Lodge Room: -

1. On your entry into the Lodge
 - confirmed that your entry was of your own volition
 - confirmed your belief in God/ Supreme being
 - that you were of mature age, and you agreed to go through the Ceremony of your Initiation.
 - "In all cases of difficulty and danger, in whom do you put your trust?" There is, of course, only one answer to this question. "In God" for the Christian: "In the name of Allah" for the Moslem; in other words, in the name of the Supreme Being appropriate to the religious persuasion of the Candidate. To avoid possible offence and to promote unity among all men, the Supreme Being of all denominations is referred to as the Great Architect of the Universe.
2. You were paraded before the members as a good man and true. You stepped off each time with the left foot, the left side traditionally symbolises evil. Each step with your left foot was symbolical of putting down evil. Each step represented your growing confidence.
3. On reaching the pedestal you were placed in a meek and humble position, on your knees before all the assembled brethren, you vowed to hele and conceal what you might learn i.e. the "Secrets of Recognition". Both words have the same meaning, namely, to cover over. The word 'hele' is derived from the Anglo-Saxon language used in England before the time of William the Conqueror. The word 'conceal' comes from the Norman French. Both words are used to ensure that the vow of secrecy was clearly understood.
4. As Freemasons we believe in a **Supreme Being**, in the first degree the Supreme being is referred to as The Great Architect of the Universe and it was in his presence that you took your **Obligation**.
5. After taking the **Obligation** the hoodwink was removed. After being restored to material light, you were informed of the **three great though emblematical lights**, or guides, in Freemasonry, the **Volume of the Sacred Law**, the **Square** and the **Compasses**. You received light at the pedestal facing East, symbolising birth and became a Brother among Masons.

6. You were entrusted with the **Sign, Token and Word** of an Entered Apprentice Freemason and then examined twice in reciting the '**Secrets of the Degree**', first at the Junior Warden's pedestal and later at the Senior Warden's pedestal.
7. You were invested with the **Badge** of an Entered Apprentice Freemason, which is a simple white lambskin apron derived from the aprons worn by the ancient operative masons. It symbolises purity and innocence, white being the emblem of purity and the lamb being usually considered as the symbol of innocence. This **Badge** is the basis of all Masonic aprons and it is adorned to show the progress a Brother has made in the Craft. The badge is more ancient than the Order of the Golden Fleece, which was established in 1430, or the Roman Eagle, which the early Romans carried at the head of a staff as an emblem of honour. It is more honourable than the Most Noble Order of the Garter founded in 1346, the highest order of knighthood in the world. Apart from signifying purity and innocence, the apron also denotes friendship. We are urged to use this symbol as a guide in our daily lives and never to disgrace the principles for which it stands. It is the Badge of the Order and all other Masonic aprons, however ornate, are derived from this Badge.
8. You will remember being placed in the **North East Corner** of the Lodge, body upright, feet in the form of a square. This is where you represented the foundation stone of a new building, the building of your new Masonic life. Be upright in life, deal with every man on the square and continue to look to the East for learning. On this foundation you were challenged, 'to raise a superstructure perfect in all its parts'. The North East corner has been well chosen for this foundation stone as it represents the point where you move from the North, the place of darkness and ignorance, to the East, the place of light and learning. Make learning a life-long ambition.
9. As a test, at the **North East Corner** of the Lodge you were challenged: "Have you anything to give"? You were deliberately prevented from accepting the challenge. All valuables had been taken from you. It demonstrated that charity comes from the heart and is a way of life not just a payment. Your dress and absence of valuables must have made you ponder in what ways you can demonstrate charity. It was meant to be a constant reminder of your obligation to relieve the distress of indigent or needy Brethren. Charity may take the form of your time, your energy, your friendship or financial assistance. The practice of charity in its broadest sense is the foundation and springboard for other qualities in life. Symbolically it showed that you entered Freemasonry as a pauper and in need.
10. The **Working Tools** which were presented to you, teach us the basis of a good life
 - The twenty-four inch gauge, the common gavel and the chisel are the **Working Tools** of an Entered Apprentice. They shape the rough stones of the future building. Symbolically, the twenty-four inch gauge teaches you how to use time; part in prayer to the Great Architect of the Universe; part in caring for your neighbour and part for yourself, particularly as it relates to your family, your work and your recreation. Your Masonic life is a symbolic rough stone that needs to be shaped for the intended structure.
 - The common gavel represents the voice of conscience, which is ever ready to warn us when we may tend to err. It reminds us with every knock to keep down all vain and unbecoming thoughts.
 - The chisel points out the advantages of education and discipline. As the workman uses the chisel to give form to the shapeless mass of stone, so education transforms the ignorant person into a civilised being.
11. You were then given copies of the Book of Constitutions and the Lodge By-Laws, after which you retired from the Lodge Room to restore yourself to personal comfort.

12. When ready, you re-entered the Lodge Room where the “**Antient Charge**” was recited to you: recommending how you should behave in your life and actions.
13. The Worshipful Master then exchanged the **Questions and the Answers** of a Entered Apprentice with the Deacons for your instruction as you will be required to answer the questions prior to be passed to the Degree of a Fellow Craft.
14. Finally, you saluted the Worshipful Master and took a seat in the Lodge Room.

Conclusion

The ceremony represents the birth of Man. At birth we are all naked, without possessions and rely upon the help and guidance of others until we reach maturity and can, in turn, extend help to others.

You were made a Freemason in the body of a Lodge "just, perfect and regular". 'Just' because the Volume of the Sacred Law was open on the Master's pedestal; 'perfect' because there were seven or more regularly made Freemasons in attendance; and 'regular' because the Lodge has a Warrant from the United Grand Lodge of England, which gives authority to perform the ceremony.

A great deal happened to you during the ceremony and it would not be surprising if you have difficulty in recollecting what happened. Do not let this concern you, for your Mentor will explain the significance of what has happened and if he does not know the answer he will be able to find out. Always remember **if in doubt ask**, it is likely that every other member has felt confused or unsure at some point. Remember Masonry should be FUN.

Solomon: Gaining Access

Solomon is the UGLE platform for your journey of Masonic Learning and Development which is accessed through the internet at <https://solomon.ugle.org.uk> or using the QR code at the bottom left of the page. If you require help, there is a special section (for which you do not need to register) entitled “Getting Started with Solomon” and is accessed from the above link or the QR code on the bottom right which includes help and instructional videos.

Solomon Home
Page



Getting started
with Solomon



Solomon: Do not spoil your future enjoyment!

Solomon is split into many different areas (*modules*) to aid your learning and development in masonry. Each are clearly labelled, hence as an Entered Apprentice only access those for the ceremony you have undertaken i.e. The First Degree [The First Degree \(ugle.org.uk\)](https://ugle.org.uk) and [Welcome Apprentice \(ugle.org.uk\)](https://ugle.org.uk) Welcome Apprentice. If you access other areas you will discover information on your future ceremonies that will lessen the impact (and potential enjoyment) of the future ceremonies through which you pass.

The module [Lodge Matters \(ugle.org.uk\)](https://ugle.org.uk) has a great deal of material, on such things as Masonic Etiquette, Offices, artefacts and the like. There is also another complimentary module on [Masonic History \(ugle.org.uk\)](https://ugle.org.uk) both should be looked at conjointly with this module.

Solomon: Welcome Modules

The module **Welcome Apprentice** is in several parts, which you can complete at your own pace, or explore individually as they take your interest. A Certificate can be earned for 100% successful completion.

Some of the activities may need to be undertaken a few times before they can be successfully completed. That is why we provide practice quizzes for you. It is intended to be a bit of fun, and not to catch you out. An important part of learning is experimentation, and we hope you will go back and have another go to earn your Certificate.