

The Common Judge.

Int most useful , but tantalising , series of Reprints issued by the Lodge of Research No 2429 Leicester No XIII is the Chetwode Crawley M.S. of cir. 1700 . On pg. 26-27 Bro.Thorp discusses the meaning of the words " Common Judge". and suggests the conclusion that it is probably a mould or template. He is apparently led to this inference by a figure in the plate of operative masons tools , which he reproduces , from the book entitled "Notes on the Early History of the Lodge Aberdeen I ter" written and published by Bro, A.L.Miller in 1919.At the bottom of the plate is a design in solid black, straight along the top edge with what might conceivably be a handle approximately one third of the lengthxxx xxx The rest of the bottom edge is a series of jagged prominences . The implement widens towards the head which shows two round indentations , irregular in shape, and neither deep enough of sufficiently correctly formed to be of use in shaping stone . It is impossible to conceive a more unhandy instrument for use as a template.It in no way complies with the plans of any template I have ever seen and is not in accordance with some slight instructions I have received in the Building Trade. I cannot receive it.

Thw word underneath the sketch of the tool , which Bro, Thorp reads as "JUDGE" is really "JADGE" as can be seen quite clearly , with a magnifying glass , in the original illustration in the Aberdeen Lodge History. The N.E.D. gives Judge or Jedge , a Scotch form of guage. It is difficult to see how the tool can ever have been used as a guage. The Is it possible that the name Judge has been transferred by the similiarity in sound to another tool. The N.E.D. gives JAG. a sharp projection or tooth on an edge or surface , . For Jag bolt it quotes Meaton of Early Edystone fame , " Jag or bearded bolts or spikes are such as with a chisel , I have a beard raised upon their angles." The Words are near enough in sound and the description of the latter is much nearer the article illustrated ; But it is not convincing as I have never seen what corresponds to a jag bolt of today with the jag on one edge only neither could it really be described as a tool. The only other suggestion I have to offer is that the artist had never completed his drawing but either he or someone else had thought it sufficiently clear to be labelled JEDGE .

So far as I am aware there is no other evidence to show that the Common Judge was a universal mould. ; indeed the very essence of a template is that it shall be cut for each job. It is impossible to conceive such a thing as a common or universal mould to fit all jobs as will be realised by a consideration of the immense variety shown in the pillar and cornice work in those magnificent buildings erected by our Brethren of old.

Bro. Knoop in his Prestonian Lecture of 1938 on The Mason Word quotes from the O.E.D. " In mining , a judge is a staff used to measure the depth of holes." He goes on to suggest that the judge possibly referred to the virga geometricalis or measuring rod with which the foundation or ground plan of a building was marked out. But the Candidate is sworn by (or on) the square compass and common judge and the measuring rod would be extremely awkward for this purpose . Even the 24" guage as we have it today , would be a difficult proposition as I doubt if they had it in 1700 in the folding or hinged form of today.

Bros Knoop and Jones in their standard work, the Mediaeval Mason , quote a number of tools used by masons. At the building of Beaumaris Castle in 1366 ? there are listed , big and little gadds.,The O.E.D. gives 2 " gad ". A sharp spike of metal . (2) In mining a pointed tool of iron or steel , e.g. a wedge or small iron punch with a wooden handle,1676. (6) a measuring rod for land . Also gadder , an instrument for splitting rock.

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The Edinburgh Register House M.S. of 1696 relates the form of oath to be taken by the Candidate in doing which he is made to take up the bible and lay his right hand on it. Note the action, take up. After which he is to be removed out of the Lodge and taught "the manner of making his due guard which is the signe (singular note.) and the postures and words of his entrie." Note there are three points in his due guard. Returning to the Lodge, he makes a ridiculous bow. Probably an exaggerated sweeping bow drawing back the right foot. (Compare the Palser Print of 1812 where the Junior Warden is shown informing the Worshipful Master that he is about to introduce a candidate. where he has his left foot drawn back, his right hand on his breast, his left hand pointing down in an exaggerated bow.) This would correspond with the 2nd point of his "entrie", the posture, after this he gives the first point of "the signe". What sign, not I suggest the sign of the degree but the sign belonging to the due guard or points of his entrie. "Then putting off his hat after a very foolish manner only to be demonstrated then" { i.e. he had not learnt it outside the Lodge. } "as the rest of the signes are likewise." (Plural note.) He says the words of his entrie which are as follows Here come I the youngest and last entered apprentice As I am sworn by God and St John by the square and compass and common judge" He took his oath, in the name of God certainly, though St John is not mentioned, and not so much by, as on, the square and compass and common judge, the last being, I suggest, the obvious and only other essential ingredient in a solemn oath or obligation, the Volume of the Sacred Law that unerring standard or guage of truth and justice. Then after repeating the penalty of his obligation, he makes the sign (described in full) of the 1st Degree. No doubt instructed by his introducer. The Masons then whisper the word to each other beginning at the youngest up to the Master who gives the word to the entered apprentice. Note the word is not given until this stage of the ceremony and immediatel preceded, as we should expect, by the second portion of his obligation, the penalty, and the sign. The M.S. then goes on, "Now it is to be remarked that all the signes (again plural) and words, as yet spoken of, are only what belong to the entered apprentice." In the second portion is described what is necessary to be done to be a master mason or fellow craft, then synonymous terms. Here at first sight is a point which would appear to bell against my suggestion that the Entered Apprentice, at his re-entry, did not give the sign of the degree but the due guard. He that is to be admitted a mamber of fellowship, is put to his knee again and takes the oath of new. After which he is taken out of the Lodge to learn the postures and signs of fellowship. Coming back he makes the masters sign (which is not described) and says the same words of entry as the apprentice did only leaving out the Common Judge. Why does he leave out the Common Judge? Obviously because it belonged to the 1st Degree only, and as it was clearly not the sign of the 1st Degree what else could it have been but the due guard. The difficulty that the fellow craft is taught the signs and postures of fellowship while as I suggest the budding entered apprentice is only his due guard or the signe of his entrie is not insuperable when we consider that in the former case we have a properly made and fully qualified mason whomis only receiving promotion after exercising himself in the Craft for a probationary period, the candidate in the latter case has only taken a portion of his obligation and not received the secrets of the degree. The EdinRg. MS. was no doubt once in the possession

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The Sloane M.S. gives among the signs to discover a Mason.

By pulling off the hat with their right hand, their two first fingers above and the thumb and all the rest below the hats brim, pulling it off and giving it a cast under the chin from left to right then on their head.

of a Scots Lodge or at any rate a Scots Mason . There are in the catechism one or two expressions which may be considered to have come from North of the Border but the only definite statement is the answer to question 8. What is the name of your Lodge ? Ans. Kilwinning. This has all the appearance of an interpolation by the copyist , The Chetwode Crawley has " the Lodge of St John" one or two others make the same reply and one the Lodge of St Stephen. The answer to question 5 has "a burroughs town" but the O.E.D. gives " burrows town " as Middle English . The spelling "weel" for ".well" has a good Scots flavour but any of the other questions and answers can be paralleled from other undoubtedly English catechisms . I can see no reason for regarding the Edinburgh Register M.S. as a Scotch working as opposed to an English working I regard it as a copy made by a Scotsman from an English source. It is also true that the due guard is given in every Scots Lodge today, but I do not think that there is any evidence that it is a Scottish innovation I think it is much more probable that it was one of the practices dropped by the Moderns in the 1730's

The Chetwode Crawley M.S. is so nearly alike to the Edinburgh Register M.S. as to make it certain they were copied from the same source or even from one another. The reference to the Common Judge is word for word

The Masons Examination of 1723 gives the reply to the question "What makes a just and perfect lodge?" as " A Master two wardens four fellows five apprentices with Square Compass and Common Gudge" and the Grand Whimsey of 1730 " a master two wardens and four fellows with Square Compass and Common Gudge . Some five or six other catechisms use the phrase "Just and perfect" but the replies are confined to the number of masons required, which vary but may be said to correspond to the answer given in the Lectures today that 7 or more regularly made masons make a perfect lodge. None of them attempt to define what makes a lodge " Just " as apart from "just and perfect" but again quoting from the Lectures of today , the answer to the question " What makes a Lodge perfect just ? The Volume of the Sacred Law unfolded." In the light of this the answer to the question in the Mason's Examination " What makes a just and perfect Lodge " is " 7 or more masons , the Square and Compasses and the Volume of the Sacred Law. The chain is long and the links are weak to the extent of invisibility , between the Catechism of 1723 and the Lectures of 1942 but that the latter are founded on the former is unmistakeable.

I have not been able to find any use of the term " Common Judge " later than 1730 (The Grand Whimsey). Masonry Dissected , of the same year, marks a distinct stage in the development of the Ritual. Prichard uses the term " just and perfect lodge" but the answer only defines the number necessary 7 or more. For the first time, in the Grand Whimsey as well as in Prichard , we have the description of the uses of the compasses. in the obligation. I suggest the reason the use of the Common Judge was dropped , was that it was no longer a correct symbol of the Candidates attitude in his obligation . His left hand being otherwise employed he could no longer hold up the Book , which is now placed on a pedestal or table.

The O.E.D. gives "Dieugard. Middle English. (Fr. God keep - you.) The salutation , God preserve you ! a spoken salutation as contrasted with a nod . 1656.

Six of the M.S. catechisms call for the Salutation. The Grand Mystery Discovered . " Give me the Solution(sic) Ans. I will ..." then follows a suggestive space although something had to be filled in . It goes on " The Right Worshipful , Worshipful Masters , and Worshipful Fellows, of the Right Worshipful Lodge from whence I came , greet you well " Why should the Mason say " I will " with a pause he does not so to any other question . In the Whole Institution the suggestive pause comes after " so do I you if you be one . and is copied in the Graham . After the pause he goes on as

if he was now satisfied the other was a Brother. Is it possible that these suggestive pauses or gaps were filled in by the "due guard" as a more suitable sign to give when proving a Brother out of Lodge than either of the degree signs.

Never the less the term "due guard" does not drop out of English masonry. Jachin & Boaz. 1762. in the description of the ceremony of initiation includes the now well established use of the compasses but in the catechism the Candidate is stated to support the Holy Bible on his left hand, which would seem to show that the Lectures or catechism had lagged behind the ceremony, as no doubt was often the case. A later paragraph describes the examination of strangers. It suggests the first action of the visitor when examined by one of the wardens, should be to give the sign of an E.A. and when asked "What is that?" to reply "the due guard of an apprentice." In the Second Degree, the candidate is instructed by the Senior Warden, before advancing to the East to take his obligation, to show the Master "his due guard" but it is not described. In the Third Degree, the Senior Warden, again at the same point instructs the Fellow Craft to show the Master in the East ~~xxxxxxx~~ the "due guard or sign of an E.A. Three Distinct Knocks describes the ceremonies entirely in the form of catechism and at the point where the sign is communicated to the Entered Apprentice it is called the "due guard or sign of an Entered Apprentice".

It is worth noticing that the Mason's Confession is the only catechism giving the due guard of the Second Degree it reads, "he gives the sign, by the right hand above the breath, which is called the fellow crafts due guard." It is possible I suppose that the region of the lungs might be so described but it would seem more likely that the mouth was indicated. Exactly what this sign was must be pure speculation, but is it possible that the candidate placed his fingers to his lips in the attitude of ~~xxxxxxx~~ Harpocrates, the god of silence, as depicted on several Masonic Medals. There are also several cases of masonic engravings showing female figures in the same attitude. In the Royal Arch Degree a similar action is enjoined. In view of the necessity of strict caution enjoined on the Candidate at all times it would seem a likely sign to be introduced into the Ceremony at some point in which case we have another of those sins of omission laid to the charge of the Grand Lodge in the 1730's.

One of the Dictionary definitions of the word "Judge" is that it was used of Christ God or Christ, as supreme arbiter pronouncing sentence on men or moral beings. The Working Tools of a Master Mason remind us of His unerring and impartial justice who having defined for our instruction the limits of good and evil (In the V.S.L.) will reward or punish etc. Is it not possible that the idea of the Common Judge, the Judge of us all, was transferred from the Almighty Architect to the Book in which is enshrined the Laws of our Divine Creator and symbolised for the newly entered Mason by the Common Judge which I hope I have shown with some probability to be the "due guard".