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The Substitute (District) Grand Master's apron for the Grand Lodge of Scotland—as indicated by a square with, in the angle, the all-seeing eye—worn by our first Grand Master MW Bro. Israel Wood Powell while he served as District Grand Master for British Columbia, District 46, from 1867 to 1871. This apron and others dating from the late 1700s are on display in the Grand Lodge Museum.

# The apron

by H.L. Haywood

I may say that on no other one symbol has so much nonsense been written. It has been made to mean a thousand and one things, from the fig-leaf worn by Adam and Eve to the last mathematical theory of the Fourth Dimension.

It may be said that a majority of the wildest theories have been based on the shape of the apron, a thing of comparatively recent origin and due to a mere historical accident. The body of it, as now worn, is approximately square in shape and thus has suggested the symbolism of the square, the right-angle, and the cube, and all arising therefrom; its flap is triangular and this has suggested the symbolism of the triangle, the Forty-seventh Proposition, and the pyramid; the descent of the flap over the body of the apron has also given rise to reasonings equally ingenious. By this method of interpretation men have read into it all manner of things, the mythology of the Mysteries, the metaphysics of India, the

dream-walking of the Kabala, and the occultisms of magic. Meanwhile it has been forgotten that the apron is a *masonic* symbol and that we are to find out what it is intended to mean rather than what it may, under the stress of our lust for fancifulness, be made to mean. When the ritual is consulted, as it always deserves to be, we find that it treats the apron (1) as an inheritance from the past, (2) as the badge of a freemason, (3) as the emblem of innocence and sacrifice.

For one purpose or another, and in some form, the apron has been used for three or four thousand years. In at least one of the Ancient Mysteries, that of Mithras, the candidate was invested with a white apron. So also was the initiate of the Essenes, who received it during the first year of his membership in that order, and it is significant that many of the statues of Greek and Egyptian gods were so ornamented, as may still be seen. Chinese secret societies, in many cases, also

used it, and the Persians, at one time, employed it as their national banner. Jewish prophets often wore aprons, as ecclesiastical dignitaries of the present day still do.

From all this, however, we must not infer that our masonic apron has come to us from such sources, though, for all we know, the early builder may have been influenced by those ancient and universal customs. The fact seems to be that the operative masons used the apron only for the practical purpose of protecting the clothing, as there was need in labour so rough. It was nothing more than one item of the workman's necessary equipment as is shown by Bro. W.H. Rylands, who found an *Indenture* of 1685 in which a

Master contracted to supply his Apprentice with "sufficient wholesome and competent meate, drink, lodging and aprons."

Because the apron was so conspicuous a portion of the operative mason's costume, and so persistent a portion of his equipment, it was inevitable that speculatives should have continued its use for symbolical purposes. The earliest known representatives of these is an engraved portrait of Anthony Sayer. Only the upper portion is visible in the picture, but the flap is raised, and the apron looks like a very long leathern skin. The next drawing is in the frontispiece to the *Book of Constitution*, published in 1723, where a brother is

*continued on page 2*



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### *The masonic apron from page one*

represented as bringing a number of aprons and gloves into the lodge, the former appearing of considerable size and with long strings. In Hogarth's cartoon "Night", drawn in 1737, the two masonic figures have aprons reaching to their ankles. But other plates, of the same period, show aprons reaching only to the knee, thus marking the beginning of that process of shortening, and of general decrease in size and change in shape, which finally gave us the apron of the present day; for since the garment no longer serves as a means of protection it has been found wise to fashion it in a manner more convenient to wear, nor is this inconsistent with its original masonic significance.

According to usages in the United States the apron must be of unspotted lambskin, 14 to 16 inches in width, 12 to 14 inches in depth, with a flap descending from the top some 3 or 4 inches. The Grand Lodge of England now specifies such an apron as this for the First Degree, but requires the apron of the Second Degree to have two sky-blue rosettes at the bottom and that of the Third Degree to have in addition to that a sky blue lining and edging not more than two inches deep, "and an additional rosette on the fall or flap, and silver tassels." Grand Officers are permitted to use other ornaments, gold embroidery, and, in some cases, crimson edgings. All the evidence goes to show that these ornate aprons are of recent origin.

It is in token of its texture—lambskin—that we find in the apron the further significance of sacrifice. It is in no sense far-fetched to see in the lambskin a hint of that sacrifice of which the lamb has so long been an emblem.

"The thick-tanned hide, girt around him with thongs,

wherein the Builder builds, and at evening sticks his trowel" was so conspicuous a portion of the costume of the operative mason that it became associated with him in the public mind, and this gradually evolved into his badge; for a badge is some mark voluntarily assumed as the result of established custom whereby one's work, or station, or school of opinion, may be signified.

Of what is the mason's badge a mark? Surely its history permits but one answer to this—it is the mark of honourable and conscientious labour, the labour that is devoted to creating, to constructing rather than to destroying or demolishing. As such, the freemason's apron is a symbol of profound change in the attitude of society toward work, for the labour of hand and brain, once despised by the great of the earth, is rapidly becoming the one badge of an honourable life. If men were once proud to wear a sword, while leaving the tasks of life to slaves and menials, if they once sought titles and coats of arms as emblems of distinction, they are now, figuratively speaking, eager to wear the apron, for the knight of the present day would rather save life than take it, and prefers, a thousand times over, the glory of achievement to the glory of title or name. Truly, "the rank has become the guinea's stamp, and a man's a man for a' that," especially if he be a man that can *do*; and the real modern king, as Carlyle was always contending, is "the man who can."

When the candidate is invested with the garment he is told that it is an emblem of innocence. The evidence indicates that it was after the Grand Lodge era, and in consequence of the rule that the apron should be of white lambskin, that freemasons began to see in its colour an emblem of innocence and in its

texture a suggestion of sacrifice.

In so doing they fell into line with ancient practices for of old, white "has been esteemed an emblem of innocence and purity." Among the Romans an accused person would sometimes put on a garment of white to attest his innocence, white being, as Cicero phrased it, "most acceptable to the gods." The candidates in the Mysteries and among the Essenes were similarly invested, and it has the same meaning of purity and innocence in the Bible which promises that though our sins be as scarlet they shall be white as snow. In the early Christian church the young catechumen (or convert) robed himself in white in token of his abandonment of the world and his determination to lead a blameless life.

Innocence comes from a word meaning "to do no hurt" and this may well be taken as its masonic definition. The innocence of a freemason is his gentleness, his chivalrous determination to do no moral evil to any person; his patient forbearance of the crudeness and ignorance of men; his charitable forgiveness of his brethren when they wilfully or unconsciously do him evil; his dedication to a spiritual knight-hood in behalf of the values and virtues of humanity by which alone man rises above the brute, and the world is carried forward on the upward way.

It has been generally believed until recently, that the operatives used only leather aprons, and this was doubtless the case in the early days, but Crowe has shown that many of the oldest lodge records evidence a use of linen as well.

Carrying with it so rich a freightage of symbolism the apron may justly be considered "more ancient than the Golden Fleece or Roman Eagle, more honourable than the Star and Garter," for these badges were too often nothing more than

devices of flattery and the insignia of an empty name. In every case, the emblem was a token of aristocratic idleness and aloofness, the opposite of that symbolized by the apron; and the superiority of the latter over the former is too obvious for comment. ■

*Extracted from Blue Lodge Masonry, Cedar Rapids, 1918*

### CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

## Food for the tree

*By VW Bro. Ed Lewis, Grand Chaplain*

In my first article I wrote about planting a seed or sapling in good soil and how important it is to be welcoming and encouraging and supportive of the new members in our lodges. In this article I am taking this idea of the sapling one step further and suggest we consider how the sapling and the growing trees are fed. Every living thing needs two essentials: food and water; and our growing tree is no exception. All the right kind of food is in the soil to make the sapling grow into a very healthy tree. However without water the sapling will not be able to absorb the food regardless of how good it is, or how much of it is present. Before long you will see it dry up and die. Likewise if it is only water that the sapling is in, for a very short time it will absorb the minerals from the water, but soon you will see it rot and die. What does that say to us as freemasons? I suggest there is an important message here for us all. One of the basic tenets of Freemasonry is a belief in a Supreme Being. Regardless of our religious background or affiliation or how we understand and describe our faith it is an essential part of our life. Let us consider it as the food for our tree. Another basic principle of Freemasonry is the obligation to grow in our

understanding of the masonic organization to which we belong. Let that be the water for our tree. If we spend all our time contemplating our spiritual systems/beliefs, some may say that we are very religious and such wonderful persons: we are like the sapling that is placed in a pot of excellent plant food. But if we do not practice our faith, if we do not put it into action, I feel we are doing nothing. We will not grow or be of benefit to anyone, and in the end we will dry up and die, faith wise. It is also true for the second part of my analogy where the water equals our involvement in Freemasonry. If we have only Freemasonry all the time (and by that I mean just going to meetings and probably occasionally filling a chair), we will prosper for a while but soon we will rot off and die—masonic wise. As I see it, we need to balance our lives with our food and water if we are to grow and be useful in this world. So my challenge for us is to examine our involvement in both areas of our lives. Ask ourselves what are we doing in our faith communities and in our lodges? Are we truly allowing ourselves to be fed and watered in balanced proportions?

Are we helping those around us in our faith communities and are we supporting our faith communities? Are we active in our lodges? Are we growing in our understanding of our fraternity? In response to our religious belief and our masonic obligation are we involved in the world around us? Are we living trees, brethren? Are we looking beyond ourselves? ■

## Advertising

While all freemasons are cautioned against improper solicitation, they may not be aware that this jurisdiction has for some years authorized lodges to advertise their

## Junior Grand Warden candidates



*VW Bro. William R. Cave*

Born in Vancouver in 1953 and raised in Kelowna, VW Bro. Cave received an MSc. from UBC in 1977 and then an MBA in Leadership and Management from City University in Seattle. He is currently self-employed with his own consulting practice specializing in strategic organizational development and training. VW Bro. Cave was previously a human resources manager in the forest industry and has been a university and college instructor in a variety of Human Resources, Leadership and Management Programmes. He and his wife Jan have two children in university, Stephenie and Allister.

VW Bro. Cave was raised in Quesnel Lodge No. 69 and was Master there in 2004-2005. He is also affiliated with the Victoria Lodge of Education and Research and Cariboo No. 4, Barkerville, where he served as Master in 2006-2007. He served as TPGM of the Cariboo Lodge of Perfection and is a member of the Quesnel Chapter of Royal Arch.

In 2001-2002 VW Bro. Cave was a member of the Grand Masters' Masonic Commission. He facilitated development of the "Five Pillar Plan" by the Board of General Purposes.

Currently Grand Marshall, he also chairs the Grand Lodge Leadership Committee of which he has been a member for a number of years. ■



*VW Bro. Jeremy Gommersall*

Jeremy Gommersall was educated in Britain and spent nearly 25 years in command and staff appointments in the Armed Forces, retiring as a Major. He immigrated to Canada in 1985 and was engaged in project management until he retired in 2001.

Active in the community, he was founding chairman of the national historic site, Britannia Heritage Shipyard, in Richmond, and is currently a director of BC Guide Dog Services and The Canadian Lifeboat Institution.

VW Bro. Gommersall was initiated in Germany thirty-seven years ago, when serving with the military, and served as Master of a lodge in England. He affiliated with Tsawwassen Lodge No. 185 and Prince of Wales Lodge No. 100, of which he became Worshipful Master; he is a member of Vancouver Lodge of Education & Research, and a member of the Committees on Grand Lodge Communication and Grand Masonic Day. He has also been in the east in a number of concordant bodies. For the last six years he has worked in the Grand Lodge office, assisting lodge secretaries.

Jeremy married Debbie in 1985. He has two children from a former marriage: a son in England, and a daughter in Calgary with his three grandchildren. ■



## Grand Lodge of BC & Yukon 137th Annual Communication

June 19-21, 2008  
**Burnaby**

Our online registration form can be found at:  
[freemasonry.bcy.ca/gl2008](http://freemasonry.bcy.ca/gl2008)



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meetings and to invite enquiries. A promotional advertising template for the guidance of lodges is available from our Grand Secretary's office or on our Grand Lodge website through the Grand Secretary's page. ■

## Drive like a mason

I know the benefits of displaying a masonic emblem on one's vehicle. I know, too, that such items may enhance public awareness of our ancient and honorable Fraternity. But those of us who display masonic emblems on our vehicles must respect the right of all others who use the streets and highways. We should go out of our way to extend the courtesies of the road to others.

Any act of rudeness or irresponsibility on the part of the driver of a vehicle that displays any emblem, license plate, or bumper sticker identifying him as a freemason reflects most unfavourably upon our institution.

If your driving etiquette does not properly entitle you to display any masonic emblem on your vehicle, you are urged, nay obliged, to remove such emblem. ■

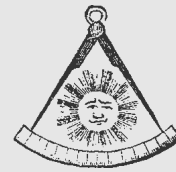
*Reprinted from The Cabletow, an official publication of the Grand Lodge of the Philippines*

## The three rosettes

By RW Bro. Otto Klotz

The rose, the queen of flowers, is the symbol of beauty, of youth, of love, of joy, and of silence. In the ancient mysteries, in mythology among the ancient Hebrews and other nations the rose was ever considered a very important symbol. The ancient Greeks dedicated the rose, as the symbol of beauty, to Aphrodite the goddess of love. The Flora

of Spring carries a rose in her hand, and Homer assigns rosy fingers to Aurora. Among the Hebrews it was customary to decorate themselves with roses at joyous festivals, hence the passage in *Wisdom of Solomon* II, 8, "Let us crown ourselves with rosebuds, before they be withered." The same custom obtained among the Greeks and the Romans. Among the latter, the Romans, this caution was particularly popular, during the winter whole cargoes of roses were shipped from Alexandria to Rome. At banquets the guests were seated upon cushions filled with rose leaves. Among the Sybarites it was the custom to sleep upon rose leaves. In Egypt and Greece the candidates for initiation into the mysteries especially wore roses; and roses were the constant ornaments of the temples during the ceremony of dedication and opening the feasts of the mysteries. The object of decorating the candidates for initiation with roses being to intimate to them, that which had been communicated to them as secrets (sub rosa) they were bound to preserve with inviolable silence, hence the rose, especially among the freemasons, is considered as the symbol of silence which the candidate not only promised to observe but a silence which he faithfully and inviolably observed. A similar custom as that practiced in the ancient Egyptian and Greek mysteries, obtained among the ancient Germans at their banquets, a wreath of flowers with a rose in its centre was suspended from the ceiling over the banquet table, as a symbol that everything that was spoken during those social gatherings should be kept as a secret among the partakers of those banquets. This custom we find even at more recent periods, in several other countries the guests that were entertained at particular banquets wore a rose as a part of their headdress,



## Grand Master's Itinerary MAY 2008

1	Th	Meeting	Board of General Purposes	Vancouver
1	Th	<b>District 16</b>	Grandview Lodge No. 96	Vancouver
3	Sat	Annual Communication	Grand Lodge of Massachusetts	
5-21	M-W	Grand Master's Scotland Tour		Scotland
25	Sun	<b>District 5</b>	Church Parade	Nanaimo
26	Mon	Centenary	St. Andrew's Lodge No. 49	Victoria
27	Tue	Meeting	Principal Officers	Victoria

while on the ceiling and upon the tables roses were either painted or produced in a natural state, for a like purpose, *i.e.* as the symbol of silence. It is thus that the rose, the queen of flowers, became the favourite flower of the freemasons, the disciples of the Royal Art, and the greatest of their festivals that of St. John the Baptist, is richly decorated with roses, thus reminding every freemason of the three-fold meaning of that emblem of Love, of Joy, and of Silence. The three Rosettes on a Master Mason's apron indicate that every Master Mason has thrice been obliged to Fidelity, to Secrecy, and to Silence. Fidelity to the Craft, Secrecy as regards our sacred Secrets, and Silence as to the proceedings of the lodge, which should never be disclosed to the profane. ■

*Published in The Craftsman, 1875.*

## Centenary

**Saint Andrew's Lodge No. 49**, Victoria, is celebrating its centenary on 26 May. At 2:00 pm the lodge will open for brethren only at Freemasons' Hall, 650 Fisgard St., Victoria.

The brethren will enjoy a re-dedication ceremony lead by our Grand Master, MW Bro. Stephen Godfrey and the officers of Grand Lodge. This will be followed by interesting remembrances of Saint

Andrew's Lodge's colourful hundred years.

A banquet for the brethren and their guests will follow at McMorrans Beach House, 5109 Cordova Bay, Road Victoria. This formal affair will commence at 5:30 pm with a prime rib dinner being served at 6:30 pm. Tickets must be purchased well in advance as seating is limited. Tickets may be purchased by contacting Bro. Gordon Churches at 250-652-1982.

**Saint Andrew's Lodge No. 49** was the third lodge constituted in Victoria. The dispensation was issued on 17 January 1907 by Grand Master MW Bro. Francis Bowser, and the lodge instituted on 14 February 1908.

Among the lodge's members have been the 24th Premier (1947-1952), Hon. Byron Ingemar Johnson, initiated in 1929; the 18th Lieutenant-Governor (1950-1955), Col. the Hon. Clarence Wallace, raised in 1952; and the Hon. Lyle Wicks, Minister of Labour (1952-1960); and Minister of Railways (1956-1959) in W Bro. WAC Bennett's cabinet. ■

## Nota bene

The deadline for submissions to the *Masonic Bulletin* is the 25th of the month, *i.e.* submissions for September must be received by 25 June. ■