

MASONIC MUSINGS

The Masonic Education Newsletter

of Lodge Epicurean No 906 and Lodge Amalthea No 914

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Welcome to Issue Twenty-three, the fifth for 2015. In this edition I look at the origins and use of that wonderful Masonic tool – *The Lewis* – via a paper by the late Don Falconer, an old acquaintance of mine from Sydney. We also consider the question – *What is the origin of the Points of Fellowship?* – via the late Harry Carr, of Quatuor Coronati Lodge, London. Enjoy!

Fraternal regards,
Kent Henderson.

THE LEWIS

The lewis is a device that enables an operative freemason to raise large stones to the required heights and set them in place with safety and precision.

Speculative connections

The lewis is a device that has been used by stonemasons and erectors for many centuries. It provides an anchorage in a stone, which enables lifting tackle to be attached to assist in the raising and lowering of stones that are too heavy or too awkward to be man-handled into position during transportation and erection.

The first time that a speculative craft freemason learns about the lewis is usually as an entered apprentice during the lecture on the tracing board, when he is told that lewis denotes strength and signifies the son of a mason. The use of the word in speculative craft freemasonry seems to have arisen as a result of the old friendship between France and Scotland, which came to be known as the “Auld Alliance”.

The seeds of the friendship between France and Scotland were sown in Scotland during the reign of David I (1124-1153), who was more *Normanised* than his predecessors. After subduing the rebellious men of Moray in 1134, David I parceled out their lands to his French-speaking Norman adherents. The friendship between France and Scotland crystallized during the reign of William I, King of Scots (1165-1214) and known as “The Lion”, who was having difficulties with Henry II of England and sought the assistance of Louis VII of France in 1166. However the alliance was not formalized until during the struggle for Scotland’s independence from England, when a joint council was established and a treaty was signed between

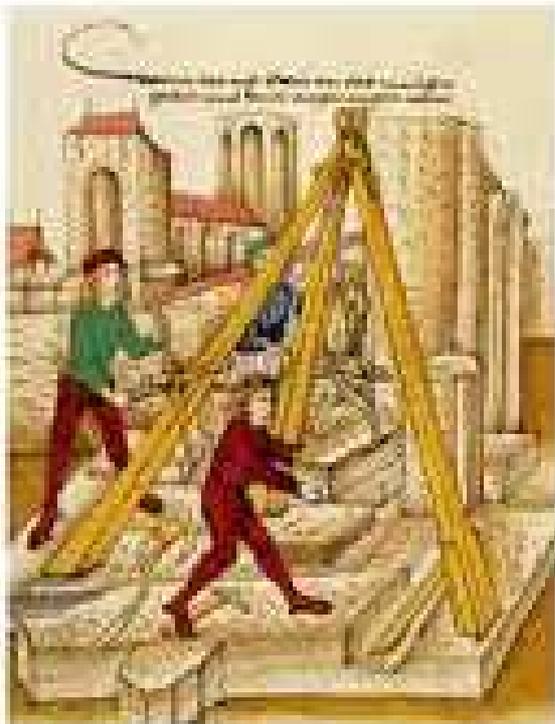
France and Scotland in October 1295, during the reign of John Balliol (1292-1296).



A Masonic Lewis

One of the earliest initiatives that resulted from this friendship was the involvement of the *Travelling Masons of France* in the design and construction of the Abbey of Kilwinning, which was founded about 1150. The French operative freemasons introduced the device into Scotland as a lever. The Scottish operative freemasons were soon calling the device a *Lewis*, which at first sight appears to be an adaptation of the French word. Nevertheless, the intimate association between the operative freemasons and the clergy in those days must not be overlooked. The clergy

regularly spoke in Latin, which at least the Master Masons must have understood and spoken, so that the word lewis is more likely to have been an adaptation of the Latin word *leuis* which means to levitate. Whichever was the derivation, it was not long before lewis was used in Scotland to designate the son of a freemason as well as the device to which it originally referred. It is relevant to note that lewis was not known in England until it was introduced by the Reverend Dr James Anderson D.D. (1684-1739), a Scottish freemason, when he prepared the second edition of the Book of Constitutions for the original Grand Lodge of England in 1738, in which he referred to the eldest son of a freemason as a lewis.



Using a Lewis

The *Constitutions and Laws* of the Grand Lodge of Antient Free and Accepted Masons of Scotland permit sons of Master Masons under the Grand Lodge to seek admission when they have attained the age of eighteen years instead of the twenty one year's otherwise required, which now is also allowed under the United Grand Lodge of New South Wales and New Zealand. (Editor's Note: the minimum age for admission in Victoria and some other Australian states is now 18 years – so the three year advantage to join as the son of Mason no longer applies). The Constitutions of the United Grand Lodge of England do not make any similar provision, although there is a custom, as distinct from a rule, that a freemason's eldest son may be initiated before any other candidate under consideration at the same time, but not in precedence to any candidate who has already been approved for admission.

The term lewis is not used in the United States of America, except under the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania, where it appears in the *Constitutions* drafted in 1727, only ten years after the first Grand Lodge was formed in London and 110 years before the United Grand Lodge of England was formed. No right of early admission is recognised in the United States of America, although some lodges hold ceremonies to welcome new offspring of members and some establish endowments in the names of the offspring, which are passed over to them after their initiation.

The origin of the name

A great deal has been written about the origin of the name, but much of it is fanciful, such as the suggestion that it arose in consequence of its use by an architect in the service of Louis XIV of France (1638-1715). In fact the device and its name were in common use in France from an early date, but that was as a direct result of the Roman occupation and the similarities of language. The probable derivation of the word has already been mentioned in connection with the use of the device in Scotland during the 1150s, but some further comments are relevant. The Latin word *leuis*, meaning to levitate, gave rise to the Middle Latin word *levis* meaning light in weight. Both of these words aptly reflect the purpose of the lewis, which is to make the lifting of a stone easy, or in the vernacular to lighten the load. The early Latin *leuare*, the Middle Latin *levare*, the Old French *leveor*, the Middle English *levour* and the modern English *lever* are all descendants of the Latin *leuis* and have the same meaning. Moreover, *leuis* would be spelt as lewis in modern English.

It is of interest to note that by 1676 the Compagnonage, the brotherhood of masons who comprised the *Compagnons du Tour* or Travelling Masons of France, had changed their name for the lifting anchorage to *louve* meaning a she wolf, which is the feminine of *loup* meaning a wolf. It is said to be in allusion to the vice-like grip of a she-wolf's jaws when angry. From that date onwards the Compagnonage also referred to the son of a mason as a *louveteau* meaning a wolf cub and to the daughter of a mason as a *louveine*. These expressions seem to have originated from a play on words, most probably having in mind a requirement in ancient Egypt for the candidate in the *Mysteries of Isis* to wear the mask of a wolf, in deference to the wolf-headed god *Upuaut*, which signifies "he who opens the way", which is a most appropriate symbolism for a candidate in freemasonry. The god *Upuaut* must not be confused with another Egyptian god of similar

appearance, the jackal-headed god *Anubis* which signifies “the Lord of the land”.

The lifting device

In its usual form the lewis comprises two iron or steel wedges separated by an iron or steel spacing plate which, when assembled together, form a dovetailed tenon that was fitted into a dovetailed mortice cut in a stone to receive it. The cross-section of the spacing plate usually is three times as wide as it is thick and its length usually is about four times its width. Each wedge has the same length and width as the spacing plate, but its thickness varies. About a quarter of the length of each wedge at its upper end has the same cross-section as the spacing plate, but the lower three quarters of the length is tapered only on the face that will be its outer face when the wedges are placed back to back with the spacing plate between them. The taper is such that the lower end of each wedge is one and one half times as thick as its upper end.

Matching holes are provided in the upper ends of the two wedges and the spacing plate, so that a shackle bolt can be inserted through them when the lifting device has been assembled in the dovetailed mortice cut in a stone to receive it. The shackle bolt holds the three pieces in their correct positions when the lifting tackle is attached. In ancient times the lifting tackle would have been supported from a tripod or a guyed gin pole, but nowadays a mobile crane generally would be used for lifting. When two wedges and a spacing plate of these proportions have been assembled in this fashion, the cross-section of the device at the upper end of the tapered section is a rectangle with sides of four units and three units, whilst the cross-section at the lower end is a square with sides of four units, thus forming a dovetailed tenon.

It is obvious that, if a tapered hole of these dimensions is cut into a stone to form a dovetailed mortice, the two wedges can be inserted into the hole when placed back to back. If the wedges are moved apart after they have been inserted into the mortice the spacing plate can then be inserted between them. A suitable working tolerance is allowed in the cross-sectional dimensions of the mortice, so that the components of the device can be inserted easily. The mortice also is made slightly deeper than the tapered length of the wedges forming the tenon, so that after lifting the stone the device can be tapped down into the mortice to free the spacing piece, which can then be removed to allow the wedges to be removed. When the mortice is being cut into a stone, it is commenced as a rectangle four units by three

units in cross-section at the surface and continued with these dimensions to the required depth of the mortice. The sides of the hole that are four units wide are then progressively undercut, so that its full depth the mortice is a square with sides of four units.



A lewis jewel

Although the device is simple to use, the location of the mortice to receive it is of utmost importance. It is preferable to use a single lifting point when this is practicable, because this allows for a simple arrangement of the lifting tackle which will permit the stone to be rotated and swung into position with the least difficulty. To achieve this, the mortice should be cut directly above the centre of gravity of the stone. If the stone is square or oblong in plan the location of the mortice is easy to determine, because it is at the intersection of the diagonals. If the stone is a T-shaped footing corner stone it can still be lifted from a single point if it is not too heavy, but greater skill is required to determine the point.

When it is necessary to lift a stone such as an L-shaped corner stone, great care must be exercised and at least two lifting points must be used required, for example at the midpoints of the two

legs. The stonemason must exercise considerable skill when determining the actual dimensions of the device and the direction in which the mortice must be expanded towards the bottom. If the device is too small, it will pull out when the stone is being lifted. If the mortice is expanded in the wrong direction, the stone may split when being lifted. If the stone is too soft or is badly laminated it may not be possible to use a lewis. Great skill and care is also required when determining the number and locations of the lifting points, especially for awkwardly shaped stones and for very large stones.

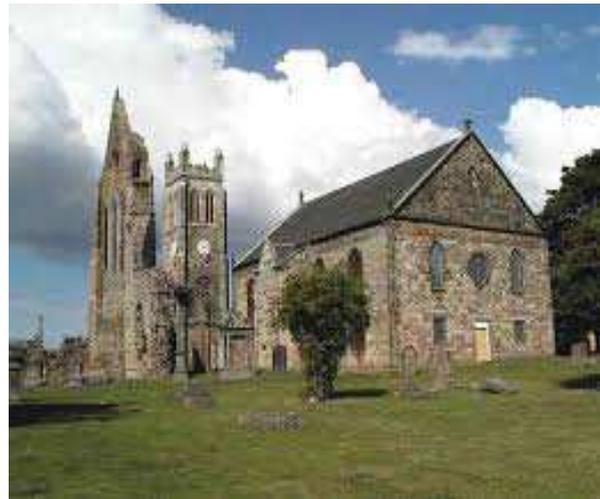
The History of the Lewis

The lewis was used extensively by the Romans from long before the Christian era, which has been confirmed by wide ranging archaeological investigations. It is not known whether the lewis was used by the builders who preceded the Romans, but having regard to the extraordinary building skills displayed by the ancient Egyptians and the Phoenicians in particular, the Romans probably acquired the art from them. As earlier archaeological investigations tended to concentrate on the recovery of artifacts, the evidence could easily have been overlooked. Some interesting examples of the known use of the lewis by the Romans include the construction of the *Colosseum* in Rome, which was completed in 80 BCE; the construction of the amphitheatre in Pompeii, which was commenced in 70 BCE; and the construction of the temple at Baalbek from about 60 CE until about 250 CE. Baalbek is of special interest, because the size and weight of many of the larger stones in the Temple of Jupiter, the first of the Roman temples that was constructed there, necessitated the use of multiple anchorages to enable them to be lifted and placed into position. Several examples of stones that have multiple anchorages are easily found among the ruins of Baalbek.

The Romans introduced the lewis into Britain for the construction of Hadrian's wall around 200, when it was erected to prevent the incursions from Scotland into England. An astute observer can still find mortices in many of the more massive stones in the ruins of Hadrian's wall. Later, when Oswey was king of Northumberland, the Saxons used the lewis when they constructed the abbey at Whitby, which was founded by St Hilda in 657 to accommodate the monks and nuns. Whitby Abbey was the chief seat of learning in the north of England for several centuries. Thereafter the device was used widely in England, although it was not known as a lewis until the name was introduced from Scotland by Dr James Anderson.

Symbolism

Although the lewis is a remarkably simple device, a great deal of skill and precision is required when fabricating its components and when locating and cutting the mortice in the stone. To choose the wrong size of the device; to choose the wrong location for the hole; to orient the undercutting of the hole incorrectly; or to fail to match the size of the mortice and its undercut surfaces accurately with the assembled tenon, at the very least would damage the stone, but could split it or allow it to fall. provided that everything is done correctly, the stone can be raised with ease, rotated as required and placed in position accurately and without damage. Thus the lewis symbolically comprehends the teachings of all the working tools of an apprentice freemason, reminding us that knowledge, grounded on accuracy, aided by labour and sustained by perseverance will, in the end, overcome all difficulties, raise ignorance from despair and promote happiness in the paths of science.



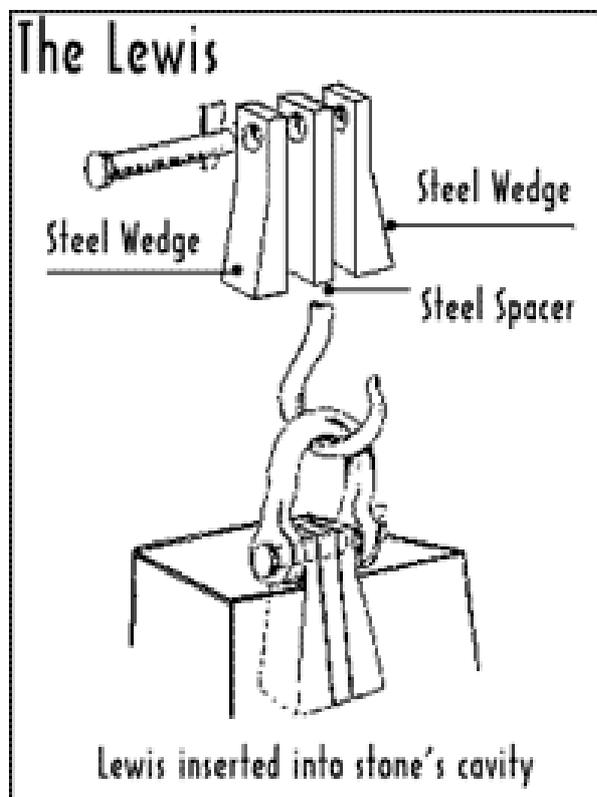
Kilwinning Abbey, Scotland

Furthermore the lewis is a most appropriate symbol of strength. It is clear from the derivation of the name that lewis, when used with reference to the son of a freemason, originated with the Travelling Masons of France, many of whom were engaged to construct the Abbey of Kilwinning in Scotland during the 1150s. This use of the expression was transmitted from operative freemasonry in Scotland to speculative craft freemasonry in England during the seventeenth or eighteenth century. The lewis is mentioned in the catechisms of speculative craft freemasons in England from the eighteenth century, when it was said to denote strength and to be depicted in a freemason's lodge as a cramp of metal dovetailed into a stone. The catechisms define the duty of a lewis as being: "To bear the heavy burden of his aged parents, so as to render the close of their days happy and comfortable".

Abbey of Kilwinning

The catechisms also define his privilege for so doing as being: "To be made a mason before any other person, however dignified by birth, rank or riches, unless he through complaisance waives this privilege".

From these old catechisms are derived the references in modern rituals. In modern speculative craft lodges, as well as being depicted on the tracing board, a lewis is often displayed inserted in a perfect ashlar suspended from a tripod. The perfect ashlar is customarily raised from its base when the lodge is opened and set back on its base when the lodge has closed, respectively signifying that the lodge has commenced labour or that it has ceased labour and is going to refreshment.



An Anachronism

In Scottish operative lodges in olden times, if an apprentice serving his indentureship failed to complete his practical training and could not pass his tests, then he could not be recorded in the books as an Entered Apprentice. Accordingly he was release from his bond and thereafter was described in the old Scots tongue as a *lowsance*, which sometimes was spelled incorrectly as *lousance*. The Scots word signified freedom from bondage, that is liberty, being derived from the verb *lowse*, which has a pronunciation midway between the words loose and louse in English. *Lowse* means to loose, to unyoke or to redeem.

In common usage it was customary to use the verb *lowse* instead of the longer noun *lowsance*. A *lowsance* was not precluded from all stonework but, like the cowan or dry-stone diker in Scotland, he was not allowed to be engaged on any tasks requiring special skills, nor was he allowed to participate in any ceremonial work restricted to those having the Mason Word. A curious clerical error that purports to describe a Lewis appears in the *Harris MS No 1* that dates from the second half of the seventeenth century in which the rehearsal of the charges to a Free Mason says:

"You shall not make any Mold, Square or Rule for any that is but a Lewis; a Lewis is such a one as hath served an Apprenticeship to a Mason but is not admitted afterwards according to this manner and Custom of making Masons".

Clearly the lewis that is recorded in this manuscript was intended to be read as a *Lowse*, but had been confused by the draftsman who probably was not aware that in Scotland the verb *lowse* was commonly used in place of the noun *lowsance*.

An Anglo-Saxon lewis

Although lewis was not used in England in a masonic context until 1738, the word evolved in the Anglo-Saxon language with a very similar usage many centuries earlier. Britain is renowned for its interesting place names, the origins and evolution of which illustrate the derivation, diversity and richness of the English language. Countless articles have been written on the subject, including an extensive series called *Notes and Queries* which includes an article on Lewisham, a suburb of London south of the River Thames.

The name literally means the home of Lewis, which is derived from the Old English ham meaning a home, whence hamlet also is derived. It is recorded in the Charter of Ethelbert dated 862, that Lewisham was then known as *Liofshema mearc* which means the place of *Liofshema*, which is derived from the Old English *mearc* meaning a boundary or a limit. This Ethelbert was not the sixth century King of Kent who became the first Christian ruler of Anglo-Saxon England, but the son of King Ethelwulf who became King Ethelbert I of England when his father died in 858.

As *Liof* or *leof* means dear and *sumu*, *suma* or *shema* means son, the name *Liofshema* literally means dear son. By the seventeenth century the place was called Lews'am, whence the present name evolved through changes of etymology.

Thus lewis evolved through Old English meaning dear son, at the same time coming through Latin and French and denoting son of a mason.

The Masonic Lewis Jewel is a pin that is worn by the Masonic son of a Masonic father. The upper bar has the father's name & year of joining the organization, with the lower bar of the son. There is a chain down to the Lewis device (explained below).

Lewis - Background and History

A lewis is a simple, but ingenious device employed by operative Masons to raise heavy blocks of stone into place during construction of stone buildings of the time. It consists of three metal parts: two wedge-shaped sidepieces, and a straight centerpiece, that fit together (tendon).

The lewis is inserted into a specially prepared seating in the top of a stone, directly above its centre of mass, and works by transferring the stone's weight into leverage on the seating of the lewis device. A dovetailed recess is cut into the top of the stone block (mortise). The two outer pieces of the lewis device are inserted first and then spread by the insertion of a appropriate sized centerpiece. The three parts are then bolted together, a metal ring or shackle is attached and the block is hoisted by hook, rope and pulley. By this means, the block is gripped securely and appropriately balanced. Once set in its place in the structure, the lewis is removed leaving the upper surface smooth with no clamp or chains on the outside to interfere with the laying of the adjacent or next course of stones.

Our ancient operative brethren used this tool as early as the Roman era. Stones with the mortised cavity for the insertion of a lewis have been found in England in Hadrian's Wall built c. 121-127 CE. Archaeologists have found further evidence of its use by the Saxons in England in buildings constructed in the 7th century. The origin of the term 'lewis' for this device is uncertain. Some authorities trace its etymology to the French levis from lever - to lift, hoist, raise; and louve - a sling, grip or claw for lifting stones.

Hadrian's Wall

Masonic historians conclude that the term came into use in the 18th century. The Lecture in the Second Degree published by William Preston in the 1780s contains a lengthy discourse on the Lewis.

WM: Brother J.W., How were the sons of craftsmen named?

JW: To the son on whom these honors were bequeathed, the appellation of Lewis was given, that from henceforth he might be entitled to all the privileges which that honor conferred, W. Sir.

There are many references to the Lewis in early Masonic Catechisms. *The Wilkinson MS Catechism* (c 1730 / 1740) states the following:

Q. What's a Mason's Sons Name?

A. Lewis

A doggerel verse in "The Deputy Grand Master's Song" printed in the second edition of Anderson's Constitutions published in 1738, written as a sort of "loyal toast" to be sung by the brethren around the festive board:

"Again let it pass to the ROYAL lov'd NAME,
Whose glorious Admission has crown'd all our Fame:
May a LEWIS be born, whom the World shall admire,
Serene as his MOTHER, August as his SIRE".



Hadrian's Wall

A paragraph in a version of the *Junior Warden's Lecture* used in the United Grand Lodge of England dating from 1801 gives this instructive explanation: "The word Lewis denotes strength, and is here depicted by certain pieces of metal dovetailed into a stone, which forms a cramp, and enables the operative Mason to raise great weights to certain heights with little encumbrance, and to fix them in their proper places. Lewis, likewise denotes the son of a Mason; his duty is to bear the heat and burden of the day, from which his parents, by reason of their age, ought to be exempt; to help them in time of need, and thereby render the close of their days happy and comfortable; his privilege for so doing is to be made a Mason before any other person however dignified".

Honour thy father... In the days of operative Masonry, it was a great source of pride when a son followed in his father's footsteps and was Entered as an Apprentice, his name 'entered' on the roll, and thereby admitted to the lodge. To study his father's skills and learn to use his father's tools were manifest expressions of the greatest honour and esteem a son could pay. It was common to carry on the tradition through several generations in the same family.

It is a heart-warming day when a young man first shows interest in Freemasonry and asks his father how he might become a Mason, and it is a proud day when that son, in the fullness of time, is admitted a member of his father's lodge by Initiation.

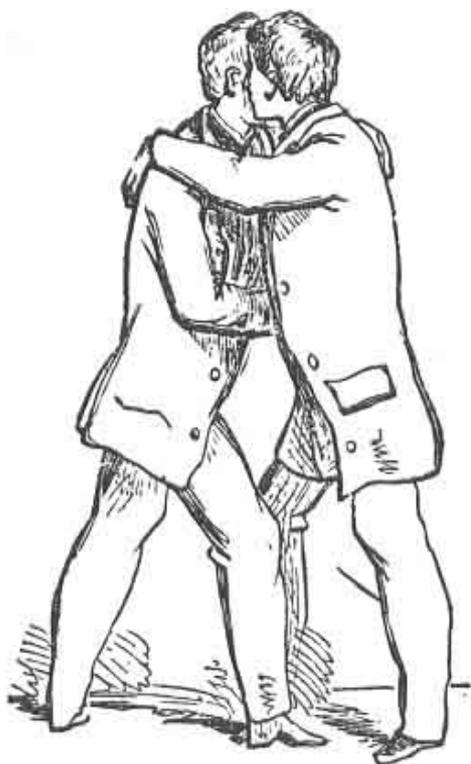
To moralize on...

On the day that King Solomon laid the foundation stone of the Temple, beginning the construction of the great building project conceived by his father David, but given to his son to complete, the last words of King David may have come to his mind. When the time of David's death drew near, he gave his last charge to his son Solomon: I am going the way of all the earth. Be strong and show yourself a man. (1 Kings 2: 1)

When a son of a Mason proudly wears the Lewis Jewel, it ought to impress upon all this same moral. It personifies the final words of the General Charge – *From generation to generation.*

What is the origin of the Points of Fellowship?

Answer: A summary of the seventeen oldest ritual texts, from 1696 to 1730, shows the Points, variously described, in fourteen of them, including five of the earliest versions from 1696 to c.1714. They certainly date back into operative times, most of them belonging to the second degree in the two-degree system, perhaps as early as the mid -1500s.



An old diagram of the Five Points of Fellowship

As to the question of origin, twelve of our fourteen texts are without a single word to indicate where the Points came from, or what they mean. Only two of the latest versions, dated 1726 and 1730, contain clues as to their purpose. They

appear, in each case, as part of our earliest legends, the first concerning Noah, and the second relating to Hiram Abif. The Points, in both stories, describe the actual mechanics of exhuming corpses from their graves, and the legends suggest that the participants were trying to obtain a secret from the dead body.

The Points, with some much-improved versions of the Hiram legend, appear again in several French exposures from 1744 to 1751, but none of them, English or French, gives a word of explanation of what the Points really meant. Yet their complexity alone implies that there must have been an explanation; nobody would have used them if they were utterly meaningless. Dealing with this problem in his Prestonian Lecture, 1938, Douglas Knoop cited three Biblical examples of 'miraculous restoration of life', in each case by something closely resembling the Points:

I. Kings, XVII, v.21, in which Elijah raised the son of the widow in whose house he lived.

II. Kings, IV, v.34, in which Elisha revived the child of the Shunamite woman.

Acts, XX, vv.9_10, in which St. Paul resuscitated a young man who was taken up dead after a fall.

They are all interesting, but the second, with Elisha, gives the story in useful detail:

"And he [Elisha] went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands; and he stretched himself upon the child; and the flesh of the child waxed warm".

Bro. Knoop was suggesting that the Points are closely akin to what we describe nowadays as the 'Kiss of Life'. But he carried his argument a stage further, saying that in the 16th and 17th centuries these Bible stories would have developed into 'necromantic practices', i.e., the art of foretelling the future by means of communication with the dead. Here, I have to abandon his theory. One may well imagine the kind of person who would become involved in 'black magic' after reading those verses in the Old and New Testament, but it is difficult to believe that they could have affected the whole of the mason craft during several centuries. We are dealing with operative masonry, long before the appearance of speculative interpretation, and in a problem of this kind a practical explanation would be much more helpful.

Regardless of the precise words in which the Points appear in the various early versions (or in the standardized versions that came later), it seems likely, if they ever had a practical purpose, that they were taught and used originally as a means of raising a broken body, or reviving someone who had been killed by a fall in the course of his work. Accidents of this kind must have been common in operative times and, searching for early documentary evidence on the subject, I went back to the Schaw Statutes, 1598. They were promulgated by William Schaw, Master of Works to the Crown of Scotland and Warden-General of the Mason Craft, 'to be observed by all the master masons within this realm'. They are the earliest official regulations for the management of operative lodges, and contain incidentally, the oldest official regulation

on scaffolding: Here it is, word-for-word, in modern spelling, but three obsolete terms are shown in [...]:

Item, that all masters, enterprisers of works, be very careful to see their scaffolds and walkways [futegangis] surely set and placed, to the effect that through their negligence and sloth no hurt or harm [skaith] come to any persons that work at the said work, under penalty of being forbidden [dischargeing of them] thereafter to work as masters having charge of any work, but they shall be subject all the rest of their days to work under or with another principal master having charge of the work.

This was the strictest rule in the whole of the 1598 code. All other offences could be satisfied by a fine, but not this one. A master, at the peak of his career, found guilty after an accident of careless scaffolding, was condemned for the rest of his life never to use scaffolding again, except under or with another principal master. He could not blame an underling; it was his personal responsibility.

I believe that this rule explains the origin and purpose of the Points, and it also solves the biggest problem of all, i.e., why the twelve oldest versions of the Points are without any kind of explanation. The masons did not need it. They learned those procedures in the normal course of their training, just as a child learns the alphabet as a preliminary to reading. The Points were simply the masons "Kiss of Life".



An old diagram of receiving the Five Points of Fellowship – American 'Webb-form' ritual style