

MASONIC MUSINGS

The Masonic Education Newsletter

of Lodge Epicurean No 906 and Lodge Amalthea No 914

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Issue 2 – April 2012

Welcome to *Issue Two*. I have three offerings for you this time. The first is ‘What’s in a Name?’ – the result of a query about where our lodge/s name/s came from. Secondly, I have included another paper by England’s Brother Clive Moore (again with a few annotations from me to give it a local perspective) – a look at *Craft Masonic Regalia* – the apron in particular. And finally, I have introduced a new section which I call ‘Questions and Answers’. In each future edition I will pose a Masonic question or two (of which you may, or may not, have thought about!) and give an opinion. As to whether my opinion is ‘the answer’ is quite another matter!

Fraternal regards,
Kent Henderson.

WHAT’S IN A NAME?

One of our younger members recently asked where our name/s came from. When **Lodge Epicurean** was formed back on 27 February 1993, we looked for an appropriate name that reflected the character of the lodge. It was to be the first *European Concept Lodge* as we call it (the first of many around the world subsequently...) – with its ‘three great pillars’ of quality work, quality dining and quality Masonic Education.



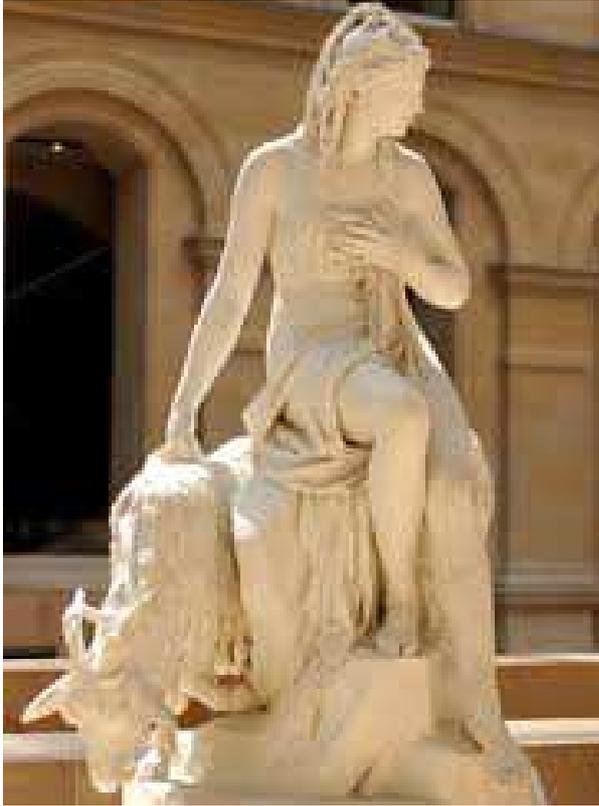
A bust of Epicurius in the Louvre, Paris.

Our first choice of name was Lodge Cornucopia, but this was rejected by Grand Lodge as a lodge of the same name had previously existed in Victoria; it having returned in warrant in 1988. This was considered ‘too close’ in time.

Thus, we went for Lodge Epicurean. Epicurus (who lived 341 BC – 270 BC) was an ancient Greek philosopher and the founder of the school of philosophy called *Epicureanism*. Only a few fragments and letters remain of Epicurus’ 300 written works, and much of what is known about Epicurean philosophy derives from later followers and commentators. For Epicurus, the purpose of philosophy was to attain the happy, tranquil life, characterized by *ataraxia*—peace and freedom from fear—and *aponia*—the absence of pain—and by living a self-sufficient life surrounded by friends.

He taught that pleasure and pain are the measures of what is good and evil, that death is the end of the body and the soul and should therefore not be feared, that the gods do not reward or punish humans, that the universe is infinite and eternal, and that events in the world are ultimately based on the motions and interactions of atoms moving in empty space.

In short, there was much of the Epicurean philosophy, including the more modern association of *Epicureanism* with the consumption of food, to merit our lodge be so named.



The nymph Amalthea and the goat
– the Louvre, Paris

When it came to our daughter lodge, **Lodge Amalthea**, formed on 29 April 1995, another appropriate name was selected. In Greek mythology, Amalthea was the she-goat (or, according to some, a Nymph) nurse of the god Zeus who nourished him with her milk in a cave on Mount Ida in Crete.

When the god reached maturity he created his thunder-shield (*aegis*) from her hide and the horn of plenty (*keras amaltheias* or cornucopia) from her crown. So it was that Amalthea spawned the Cornucopia – what an appropriate name for the daughter of Lodge Epicurean.

The fact that Amalthea was also a goat, in itself an animal of pseudo-Masonic connection, was – perhaps – a bonus!?

Interestingly, when it came to our granddaughter lodge, formed at Warragul on 22 February 2004, it was named **Lodge Cornucopia** – as Grand Lodge now considered that the time lapse since the demise of the former lodge with that name (now 16 years distant) was ‘okay’!

OUR DISTINGUISHING BADGE **- A Look at Masonic Regalia**

This talk is about the origins of the regalia and dress worn in our lodges. The apron has been the badge of a mason for many hundreds of years, but I will also be considering other items with more recent origins.

As with much of Masonic history there are large areas of uncertainty and the pace of change was far from consistent. The evidence I have used includes the early exposures, Books of Constitutions and lodge records. Some pieces of early regalia have also survived, but given the individualism once permitted in design and decoration we must be careful not to take what may have been a unique item as typical of its time.

Let's start with the apron, the oldest and most distinctive badge of a Freemason. To us it is the badge of innocence and the bond of friendship, but where did it originate and how did it come to its present form?

Craftsmen have always worn aprons for protection whilst working but they also had a symbolic importance in many early

civilisations. They appear in Egyptian, Indian and Jewish traditions – in ancient Persia candidates for the mysteries of Mithra, the god of light and truth – are said to have been invested with a white apron.



The Entered Apprentice apron

However, medieval operative masons wore their knee length leather aprons purely for protection at work; although not every mason wore one. The early fabric roll records list several classes of operative mason but only one simple style of apron seems to have been worn.

These were sometimes provided by employers as a reward or bonus; at York Minster in the 1350s each mason received a tunic, apron, gloves and clogs; similarly in 1430 a church in Suffolk gave each of their masons a white apron and a pair of white leather gloves.

Later, our speculative forebears would adopt the traditions and charges of those early operative masons, taking as their badge a plain white apron with a bib or flap. An early Masonic song entitled *The Free Mason's Health*, believed to date from 1710, refers to such aprons and we know that lodges fined their members for not wearing them; in 1737 the By-Laws of the Lodge of Felicity stipulated a one shilling fine for this offence.

Like the operatives' aprons they were full length and made of dressed leather, usually sheepskin. In 1741 a Brother attending a Lodge at the *Duke of Bedford's Head* was fined for trying to wear his own work apron in lodge. Amongst the earliest surviving images of speculative aprons are an engraving of the first Grand Master Anthony Sayer, dated 1717 but probably printed in the 1740s, which shows just the top part of an apparently plain leather apron with the flap up; and the frontispiece of *Anderson's 1723 Constitutions* which depicts both aprons and gauntleted gloves.

At their Initiation Entered Apprentices were invested with this plain white leather apron. They were often passed a Fellow Craft on the same night but still kept the same simple apron. The 3rd Degree did not appear in English Freemasonry until the 1720s.

Operative masons would have fixed an apron flap up whilst working; although maybe the more skilled craftsmen did leave it down to show that they did not do the rough work that required such protection. It appears that the first Speculative Masons did fix the flap up.

Many illustrations of early 18th century aprons show a buttonhole for that purpose; but later the flap would be used to show the Degree the

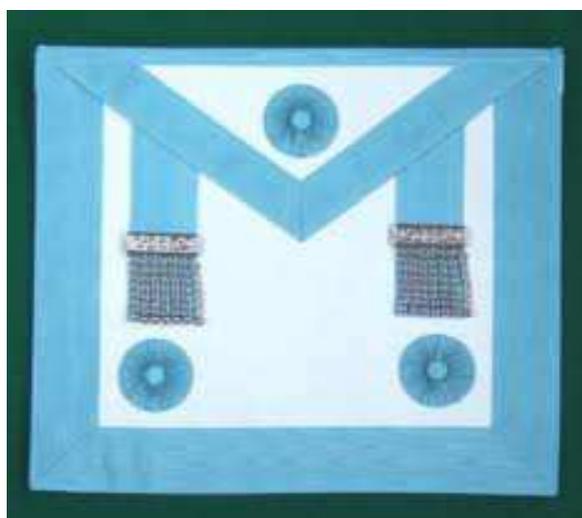
wearer had attained. In 1751 the French exposure *Le Macon Demasque* said that Apprentices tied their aprons with 'the flap on the inside', Fellowcrafts had it outside buttoned up to the waistcoat but Master Masons were 'at liberty to let it fall down'.



Fellow Craft's apron

There were other ways of tucking and folding apron corners to indicate rank. Some constitutions (notably in America and Europe) still do this but English lodges (and those in Australia and New Zealand and other places of direct English descent, post 1813) now use rosettes, although a few still raise the flap on Entered Apprentice's aprons.

The earliest surviving English aprons with rosettes are from the late 18th Century; initially they may have been added just as ornamentation, although some writers suggest they are in token of loops or buttonholes for fixing the apron into rank denoting configurations.



Master Mason's apron

Early 18th century lodges purchased their aprons in bulk; regular replacements were necessary as Masons eat, drank and smoked during meetings. The aprons usually remained the lodge's property (this is still the case in most European lodges). A Lodge at the *Crown & Anchor* in London recorded the purchase of 42 such aprons in 1742.

Anderson's 1723 Constitutions included in its regulations an old Scottish practice called 'clothing the Lodge' that required candidates to pay for new aprons and gloves for all the lodge members at their initiation. Some lodge by-laws, such as those of the Old Lodge in Lincoln, required the lodge itself to purchase new gloves and aprons for every member after the admission of new brethren.

The Tyler would hand these aprons out to members and visitors just prior to the meeting. The 1737 By-Laws of the Lodge of Friendship No. 3 instructed their doorkeeper to 'to keep the key of the apron box' and in the early 1730s the Old King's Arms Lodge asked members to write their names on the aprons to assist the Tyler in this duty.



An 18th Century Apron of unknown origin

During the early part of the 18th century these aprons retained their original simplicity; accounts of the first Premier Grand Lodge Festivals speak of all the Masons present being 'cloathed in white aprons and gloves'.

The first significant change came when aprons were lined with silk. At first this may have been to protect the wearers' clothes, but the

lining was then turned over the front edges of the apron to create a visible trimming.

In 1734 a Lodge at the *Prince of Orange's Head* in London ordered 'two Grand Masters aprons lined with Garter blue silk and turn'd over 2 inches'. There was Grand Lodge concern about the colour of silk being used by private lodges.

In 1731 the Premier Grand Lodge resolved that only Grand Officers were permitted to use blue silk to line their white leather aprons, the Masters and Wardens of private lodges could use white silk and Grand Stewards red. This instruction was re-stated in 1735 and 1739; although the extent to which private lodges followed such instructions is debatable, particularly those away from London. This 1731 Grand Lodge resolution is the first official mention of blue as a Masonic colour. Its choice was probably inspired by the ribbon colour of the Order of the Garter, Britain's oldest order of chivalry.

Masons at the time certainly described the colour as garter blue; in 1799 William White, the Grand Secretary, wrote that suitable blue ribbons for Grand Officers could be 'had at only one place in London & is made for the Knights of the Garter'. The colour of the Garter ribbon did change over the years – it was sky-blue in the early 18th century but changed to a darker blue in the 1740s. Significantly Grand Officers' regalia also changed soon after to the same darker shade and the lighter blue was then increasingly used by private lodges.

Alternatively blue could have been chosen as a Masonic colour for anyone of its many other royal and religious associations, but the peculiarly Masonic connotations we now attach to it were developed retrospectively.

As the 18th century advanced aprons became progressively smaller making them lighter and easier to wear. Consequently they could be made from finer quality lambskins or even chamois leather, with silk or linen ribbons to tie them; linen was also sometimes used for the apron itself. Differing apron shapes also started to appear; sometimes they were be U-shaped or almost V-shaped and the flaps could be half round or triangular.

The more traditional aprons were still worn; as late as 1812 the Lodge of Relief in Bury purchased six dozen skins to make them.

Although the extent to which their members then decorated them is not known; in the second half of the 18th century Masons increasingly kept their own aprons and personalised them.

A 1762 exposure said that ‘every brother had an apron made of white skin and the strings are also of skin, though some of them chose to ornament them with ribbons of various colours’. At that time Royal Arch and Knights Templar rituals were worked in many Craft lodges, and some Masons would add a red silk edging to their apron if they were in the Royal Arch and a black edging for Knights Templar.

Some brethren also used their aprons to depict Masonry’s rapidly expanding moral and traditional symbolism; many just drew on them with India ink, but some were painted or embroidered. During the third quarter of the 18th century these designs became ever more ornate, often incorporating the symbolism of other orders as well. Responding to this demand professionally printed, coloured and ornately embroidered aprons started to appear, sometimes made of satin or silk. Particularly notable were the elaborate satin aprons of the Moira Lodge of Honour in Bristol; dating from 1813 to 1815 they were based on a painting by William Hobday commemorating the Earl of Moira.



A Mason’s Apron – 1826 (origin unknown)

There was criticism of this increasing ornamentation. In 1772 the Antients Grand Lodge complained that brethren had been appearing with gold trimmings and devices on their aprons that were inconsistent with the dignity, propriety and ancient custom of the Craft. The Antients lodges were slower to give up the more traditional aprons but did still decorate them, most notably with their Grand Lodge’s coat of arms. At the unification of the Antients and Moderns Grand Lodges in 1813 there were many different apron designs and sizes in use. Previous Grand Lodge orders

had specified details such as the lining colour, but the now United Grand Lodge wanted to standardise and simplify Craft regalia in all respects. The agreed standards were published in the 1815 *Book of Constitutions*.

Entered Apprentices were to wear plain white lambskin aprons 14” to 16” wide, 12” to 14” deep, square at the bottom, with no ornamentation and white strings. Fellowcraft aprons were the same size but with two sky-blue rosettes at the bottom; Master Masons aprons had a sky-blue lining and edging added, plus a third rosette on the flap. Masters and Past Masters had the same apron as a Master Mason, but instead of rosettes they had what we now call ‘levels’, although that is not the Master’s jewel. Levels first appeared on aprons in the early 1800s but their origin is unclear – in 1815 Grand Lodge described them not as levels but as silver or sky-blue ribbons set in ‘perpendicular lines upon horizontal lines, thereby forming three several sets of two right angles’. The only major authorised variation to these standards was the Grand Stewards’ crimson aprons, which are still worn today.

Tassels first appeared on aprons in the 18th century; when Master Masons’ aprons like those of Entered Apprentices and Fellowcrafts were tied by strings or ribbons knotted under the flap, the ends hanging down as tassels. When for convenience belts were fitted to Master Mason aprons the tassels were retained as decoration; at first hanging together as though still from a knot, but later moving apart to their present positions. Our silver chain tassels were a later commercial innovation. First appearing in the 1830s, they were not prescribed until the 1841 *Book of Constitutions*.

Having looked at aprons let’s consider collar jewels. Now used to denote a rank or office, in the early 18th century before breast jewels became popular they were often purely commemorative. In 1727 the Premier Grand Lodge laid down that the Master’s jewel was a square, the Senior Warden’s a level and the Junior Warden’s a plumb rule. Initially those officers probably wore their working tools on ribbons about their necks, rather than the small collar jewels we wear. A full list of jewels with standardised designs was set down at the unification of the two Grand Lodges; at which time the Past Master’s jewel with Euclid’s 47th proposition was formally introduced and the office of Deacon was extended to all lodges, with a dove bearing an olive branch as its jewel.

The first collars were just simple ribbons; in 1727 Grand Lodge stipulated that the Master and Wardens of private Lodges should use white ribbon for the purpose. The first reference to a tailored collar was in the 1742 French exposure *Le Secret des Francs-Maçons*, which described a blue ribbon or cord 'cut in the shape of a triangle'. Emulating the collars of civic and guild dignitaries Masonic collars became progressively wider, so had to be stiffened to prevent twisting. After the unification the width of collars was fixed at 4"; some lodges added ornate chains to their Master's collar, the Past Masters having a line of silver braid.

Let us now consider gauntlets and gloves. Many cultures have attached symbolic importance to the giving and wearing of gloves, but medieval operative masons wore their gauntleted gloves for protection from the lime mortar they used. The 13th century *Book of St. Albans* shows masons wearing gloves and archives such as those at Ely Cathedral in 1322 record their purchase; made from un-dyed skins they were naturally whitish in colour. Speculative Masons would adopt as their regalia the operative's apron and white gauntleted gloves.

In Scotland the *Schaw Statutes* of 1599 required newly made Fellow Crafts to purchase new gloves for each lodge member; in 1686 Dr Robert Plot referred to the same custom in his *Natural History of Staffordshire*. Anderson's 1723 *English Constitutions* required that 'every new Brother at his making is decently to cloath the Lodge'; the 1764 edition of the *Antients Constitutions* added that white gloves should be provided not only for every lodge member but also for their wives and sweethearts (this practice is continued in many American and European lodges to this day).

However, such practices may never have been widespread in English lodges and by the 19th century those lodges that had collected 'glove' money from candidates seem to have absorbed it into a single joining fee. Instead, in many lodges the custom was for the lodge to present an apron and gloves to the Initiate; a 1737 French exposure said that Initiates were given a white skin apron, a pair of men's gloves and a pair of women's gloves for the 'person of that sex for whom he has the most esteem'. Some English lodges today still attach a special symbolic importance to the presentation of white gloves to the initiate.



An American Past Master's Apron

Gauntlets are stout gloves that extend over the lower arm and were a common glove style in the early days of Freemasonry. In 1884 they were stipulated for grand officers, that is no longer the case; grand officers and officers of private lodges can still wear them but generally only the Master and Wardens do and in the form of embroidered cuffs worn over gloves.

Let us now look at other items of clothing worn by Speculative Masons. Hats were everyday male attire in the 18th century, but many early illustrations of lodge meetings show only the Master wearing one; which according to the 'exposures' he removed for prayers and to open or close the Lodge. However, the general practice is uncertain as there are illustrations that show everyone in the lodge wearing a hat; the late 18th century minutes of the Britannic Lodge No. 33 suggest that their members all wore hats decorated with feather plumes. Hats are still worn in a few English Lodges and in many overseas lodges, notably by the Master of American lodges. The members of the Pilgrim Lodge No. 238 in London have worn hats since their formation in 1779 and in the West Country lodges that use the *Bristol workings* the Master still wears a hat on entering or leaving the lodge.

Until the late 18th century swords were also a fashionable item of everyday dress. Drawn swords were certainly carried by the early Tylers, but wearing them in lodge was at one time forbidden by the Premier Grand Lodge, possibly to discourage duels; in 1767 the members of the Lodge of Friendship No. 3 had to seek a dispensation to wear them in lodge. Sword wearing may have been more prevalent in Antients lodges and have played a greater part in their ritual. French exposures describe brethren standing around the Initiate

with their sword points at his breast as the blindfold is removed; this still forms a part of the Bristol workings and of the rituals used by some other constitutions (notably in Ireland and also in New South Wales).

The practice of wearing black ties in lodge is a relatively recent one; in fact white ties and before that white neck cloths have a much older Masonic pedigree. The present custom probably started towards the end of the 19th century when dinner jackets worn with black ties became fashionable; its continuance after most lodges gave up wearing dinner dress was due to their adoption as a mark of respect for those who gave their lives in the Great War. Very few lodges in England today require their members wear dinner jackets; rather lounge suits. The only places where dinner jackets are commonly worn is in Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. In some American lodges lodge officers (only) wear a dinner jacket (tuxedo), although in some lodges tuxedos are worn to the annual Installation meeting. The use of white tie dress (full dress tails) is only used in the Masonic

Why does the Senior Deacon ‘await the return of the Junior Deacon’?

There are several theories as to where this statement has come from, which is very common in English-derived rituals, at least. At some early period, the work was apparently not all carried out in the same room or place. The ‘waiting’ may be a relic of that time. Support for this suggestion is given in the *Edinburgh Register House Manuscript* of 1696, and other MS. Catechisms which describe the candidate as going out with the youngest Mason to learn the sign, the posture and words of entry. According to the Scotland’s Schaw Statutes (of 1598 and 1599) two Entered Apprentices were actually present at the reception of a Fellow, which affords the reason why the esoteric part of the ceremony had to be performed in another room. Deacons are mentioned as early as 1762, in England. The Junior Deacon acted as Inner Guard before the latter office came into existence and he, or his equivalent, still does in many European rituals – which descend from the earliest days of organized speculative Freemasonry.

Another answer may lie with the English *Unlawful Societies Act* of 1799 that saw the first

world by Grand Lodge officers in the Australian and New Zealand Grand Lodges.

We have considered individual items of regalia and dress, but aside from military lodges did any lodges adopt an actual uniform for their members? Very few did, although illustrations showing brethren all wearing the fashionable day or evenings clothes of their time may sometimes give us that impression. In the early 19th century the Moira Lodge in Bristol did decide to all wear blue coats, knee breeches and black stockings, doing so until 1845. Some other lodges also resolved to wear particular colours of coat and waistcoat; in 1790 the St. Albans Lodge chose green coats with buff waistcoats.

That completes this brief look at English Craft regalia. There are of course many other styles in use around the world; but if you look beneath all the variations and adornments you will always still find that first simple apron, which was, is and always will be the distinguishing badge of a Mason.

statute ‘for the more effectual suppression of societies established for seditious and treasonable purposes’. Once enacted it affected all societies whose members were required to take an oath not authorised by law, which would be deemed as ‘unlawful combinations’. It was as a result of the intervention of the Grand Master of the Antients, the 4th Duke of Atholl, and the then Acting Grand Master of the Moderns, the Earl of Moira, that a special exempting clause was inserted into this legislation in favour of societies ‘held under the Denomination of Lodges of Freemasons’ provided that their names, places and times of meeting and the names of the members attending were registered with the local Clerk to the Justices of the Peace. The fact that several members of the Royal Family were Freemasons was also telling... Evidentially, for some time, before the law was later quietly abandoned, in strict adherence to the statute, the names of lodge attendees had to be deposited with the local Clerk prior to every meeting. It was apparently the Junior Deacon’s role to deliver the list, and this maybe were ‘await the return of the Junior Deacon’ comes from.

However, all these postulations are just that. Like more than a few things in Masonry, the answer is probably lost in the mists of time...