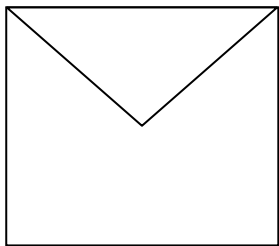


Behind the Symbol

The Apron



One of the first and most noticeable symbols the new mason comes into contact with is the Apron. He is told that it is the badge of a Mason, that it is made of lamb skin, and that the lamb in all ages has been regarded as an emblem of innocence. He is not told however, that because it was viewed as innocent, a lamb was also a common sacrifice.



HISTORY

History records sacrifices of animals amongst the Semitic peoples for thousands of years. The lamb was much used by the Jews, particularly during Passover. In earlier times, food was not so plentiful, and people were not so wealthy, that they could afford to waste food indiscriminately. Buying a lamb for a temple sacrifice was not something one did often. It was expensive so it was done perhaps once a year at Passover, and even then only if one could afford it.

The lamb was offered as a sacrifice at the altar by having its throat cut across and being drained of blood. The blood was then used in the ritual. The lamb was then prepared to be a burnt offering by being skinned and gutted. Finally it was put to the flames and when it was sufficiently “sacrificed,” it was put aside as food for the priests and the poor. At each of these steps there were professionals to do the work for you, especially the dirty bits, provided you paid them. ¹

Notice that in the above the skin of the lamb was not used in the process of the sacrifice, but you can be sure it was not thrown away or wasted.

The use of the Apron as a piece of ceremonial clothing is widespread. It has been used by;

- Jewish priests - as recorded in the Old Testament
- Egyptian priests - shown in statues and paintings wearing triangular aprons with the point up
- Egyptian mummies - Tut-Ankh-Amun was found to be wearing an apron when unwrapped
- Candidates of ancient Mysteries - Egyptian, Persian, Jewish, Indian.

Aprons were not just ceremonial though. Artisans, craftsmen and tradesmen have been shown wearing aprons since at least the 12th century in Europe. Trade and guild members in 14th century Britain are recorded as being required to wear their guild livery ² which was often referred to as a “Badge” and served to identify the wearer’s craft or trade. It was common for all crafts and trades to wear aprons.

Sir Walter Besant, in his “London in the Eighteenth Century” says that in the 1700s;

The carpenter wore a white apron looped up at the side, the shoe maker wore a short leather apron, the blacksmith a long leather apron, the barber a white apron with pockets, the butcher a blue coat and apron, the baker was all in white including his cap, the tapster (Bartender) had sleeves rolled up and a white apron with

¹ The story of the money changers at the temple during the Passover from the New Testament shows that some thought it wrong to make profits from helping others perform their sacrifices. The point was that they should do it themselves. Paying someone else to perform a ritual and watching from the sidelines, or being told about it, may be a great starting point to begin learning about it, but for any ritual to have real impact it must be experienced first hand. Having someone else do it for you by paying them leaves you with no direct experience of it, and therefore no real learning from it.

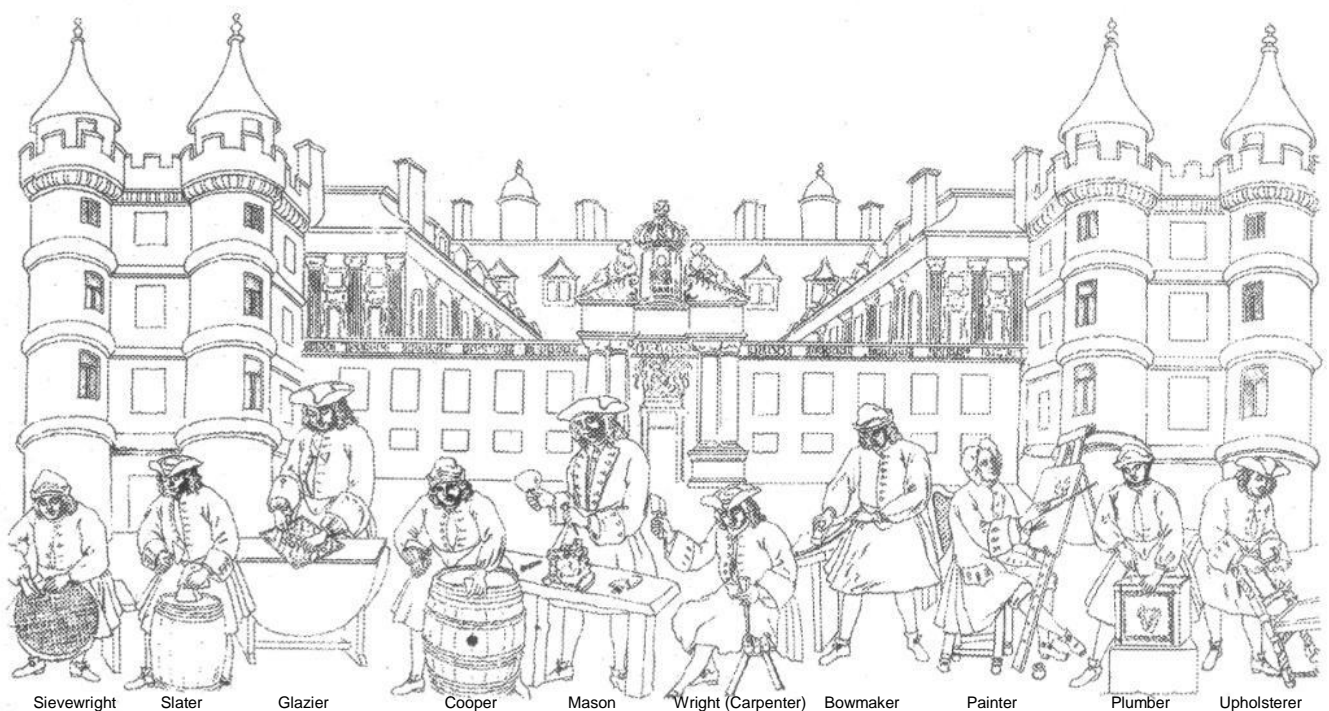
² The word Livery comes from the old French word *livrée* meaning deliver – the masters were required to “deliver” the clothing to their servants.

the corner tucked up into the waistband, the shopmen, except the draper, all wore aprons. The apron was indeed the symbol of the servant and craftsman, it belonged in varied form to every trade.

As a general rule, the employer, or master, was required to provide the livery for his workmen. In 1355, York Minster records that it provided aprons, gloves and clogs to its Masons. The indenture of Symon Bond in 1685 as an apprentice to John Cooke of Harbury, a stone mason, says that he will allow his apprentice;

“sufficient wholesome and competent meate drinke lodging and aprons – all the rest of hi apparrell being to be p’vided by his said parents”

Between 1456 and 1510, nine trades were incorporated in Edinburgh and were granted a charter, or Seal of Cause. Receiving a charter gave the guilds certain rights for which they agreed to control their members, regulate wages, working practices, apprenticeships, and welfare. The Masons charter was granted in 1475 and the engraving below shows the craftsmen wearing their particular aprons.



**Members of the Incorporations of Trades, Mary’s Chapel Edinburgh
Represented as engaged in their several crafts in front of the Royal Palace of Holyrood**

(From: *The Master Masons to the Crown of Scotland and their Works*, Robert Milne, 1893)

The records show that the Operative Stone Mason’s apron during the 14th and 15th centuries, was a full sheep skin and reached down well below the knees. In an English record from 1423 we read of “*two skins given to the masons to make naprons³ of,*” and in 1428, “*two naprons of leather*” being provided.

The operative Mason’s apron was a heavy leather skin worn to protect the clothing from being soiled and the body of the workman from injury. It was secured to the waist by a leather strap passed around the waist and tied in the front and had a bib, or flap, that was held up by another leather strap around the neck. When at rest or refreshment, the bib was allowed to fall down in front and became referred to as the “fall”. In the early days of speculative Masonry, the fall had a button hole that could be buttoned to the jacket to keep it up. An example of this can be seen in the portrait of Anthony Sayer, the first Grand Master (which I can’t locate at the moment for some reason).

³ Napron is an old French word meaning cloth. It is believed that over time, “a napron” became “an apron”

Gentlemen Freemasons began to line their aprons with silk to prevent their clothes being soiled by the tanned leather. The first record of a lined apron is from 1731.

From early 18th Century images of speculative Freemasons we can see that the apron was still quite long (see picture at right) and still resembled a working apron. As time passed, the aprons grew smaller as they became more symbolical rather than protective and by the 1790s seems to have been purely symbolic,

with even operative Masons wearing a speculative apron rather than a working one. One preserved apron from an “antients” lodge from around 1790 is highly decorated with symbols from several degrees.



An Irish apron from around 1790 is of the current rectangular shape and has 3 ribbons around the edge. The outer ribbon is blue (Craft), the middle red (Royal Arch) and the inner ribbon is black (Knight Templar)

The ribbon, used to hold the apron on, was passed under the fall, all the way around the waist, and tied in front, again under the fall. Once tied the ends of the ribbon used to hang down the front of the apron as can be seen in portraits from the period.

The addition of the tassels seems to have come about in the 1830s when the ribbons used to tie the apron on were replaced with a belt and hook in the form of a snake. Tassels were added as permanent decorations to replace the hanging ribbons.

By May 1814, there was a huge proliferation of apron sizes, types, materials and colours, which prompted the United Grand Lodge to insist on a standard. Even so, it was 20 or 30 years before standard aprons were commonplace.

Rule 269 of the Constitutions said that the Entered Apprentice Apron was to be of “A plain white lambskin fourteen inches wide, and fourteen inches deep, no ornament, white strings and a flap” and this was to be the basis for all aprons henceforth, with various ribbons and decorations added to indicate Masonic advancement or particular order (Mark, Royal Arch, etc).

The Fellowcraft Apron was “*The same, with two sky-blue rosettes added.*”

The Master Mason’s was “*The same, with sky-blue lining, and edging of not more than two inches wide; An additional rosette on the flap, silver tassels on sky-blue strings.*”

Although aprons exist from before 1800 with Taus (or levels) on them, the earliest written record of them is from an Order of the United Grand Lodge from 1814 describing how they were to be placed. They were to be of half-inch ribbon laid out in “*perpendicular lines upon horizontal lines, thereby forming three several sets of two right angles*”. They were to be “*two and one half inches wide by one inch high*”. Similar dimensions are still in use today, but the ribbon has been replaced with metal

Before the addition of rosettes, aprons were worn differently to show Masonic progression. The apprentice wore the apron with the flap up, the journeyman or fellow wore his with the flap down and the left corner tucked up, and the master Mason with the flap and corners down. This tradition is continued in many Masonic jurisdictions in Europe and America.

In England, and jurisdictions which descended from the UGLE after the 1813 unification, rosettes are more common methods of displaying Masonic advancement.

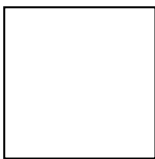
SYMBOLISM

The investiture of the Apron is performed by the Senior Warden, the representative of the Soul. In his book "The Meaning of Masonry" Walter Leslie Wilmshurst says of the Apron;

"The physical form with which we have all been invested by the Creator upon our entrance to this world, and of which we shall all divest ourselves when we leave the Lodge of this life, is represented among us by our Masonic Apron. This our body of mortality, our veil of flesh and blood clothing our inner soul, this is our real 'badge of innocence', the common 'bond of friendship' with which the Great Architect has been pleased to invest us all. The human body is the badge which is 'older and nobler than that of any other Order in existence', and though it be but a body of humiliation compared to that body of incorruption which is the promised inheritance of him who endures to the end, let us never forget that if we never do anything to the badge of the flesh, that badge will never disgrace us."

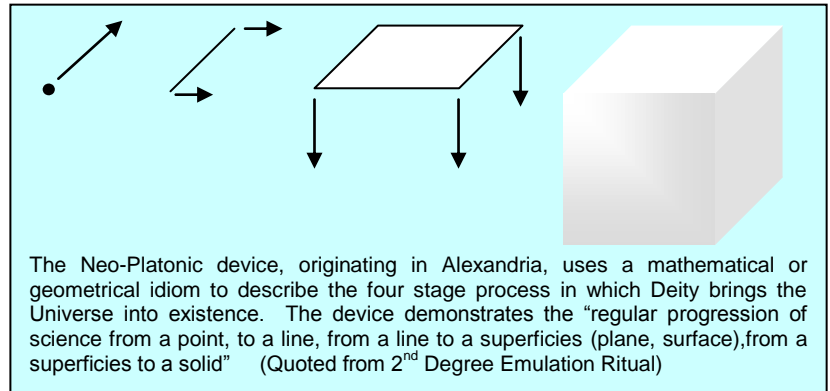
There is a great deal of symbolism behind the apron, and there are many schools of thought about it. Here we will mention just some of the more well known. We will begin with the most basic and most ancient symbolism of the geometric shapes and numbers that make up the apron.

Four



The apron of the early 1800s was 14 inches square and although it is now mostly a rectangle of 14 by 16 inches it obviously retains four right angles. Squares or Rectangles represent the physical world and are associated with the four elements of antiquity; earth, air, fire, and water, and the four limbs; two legs and two arms. Therefore, squares represent the material world and the body. The Square and the number 4 have been a symbol of the physical world, of matter, of the Body for millennia, and to the ancients, it also symbolised the four winds, or the four points of the compass. Four also symbolises the fourfold human organism, consisting of Physical (Uninitiated), Emotional (1st Degree), Intellectual (2nd Degree), and Spiritual (3rd Degree).

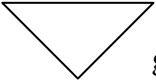
In the Western Metaphysical system, and Western Philosophy until at least the 19th century, the universe (macrocosm) and the individual (microcosm) consisted of four "worlds"; the Physical world or Body, the Psyche/Soul, the Spirit, and the Divine. According to Kirk McNulty, these four worlds are represented in the design of Gothic Cathedrals in the form of the Nave, the Choir, the Sanctuary, and the Tabernacle, which makes the Cathedral a representation of both the Universe and of Man. He also says that it represents the four stages process of bringing the Universe into existence.



The four right angles remind us of the four corners of the first tracing board which contain the tassels representing the four cardinal virtues, and remind us to practice Temperance, Prudence, Fortitude, and Justice. The four sides remind us that Purity, Truth, Sincerity and Honesty are the foundations of morality. Between the four right angles there are two horizontal lines (levels), at the top and bottom, and two parallel perpendiculars (vertical plumb lines) at the sides. The lower level represents the Earth and the upper level represents the Heavens, again matter and spirit.

The Plumbs or sides, symbolise uprightness and rectitude. Rectitude of Conduct. Rectitude of Morals. Rectitude of Life. The upper level being a spiritual level, promises that those who walk uprightly before God and Man (symbolised by the two plumb lines) will walk eternally in the level of the spirit, or Heaven.

Three



The flap, or fall, in most jurisdictions, is a triangle. In geometry, one cannot make a geometric figure using a single straight line, nor indeed with two straight lines. Three lines, however, can make a triangle, the first perfect geometric figure created of straight lines. If you wish to symbolise the number three, there is no more obvious, or more simple way of doing so than to use a triangle.

The three sides are suggestive of the triune nature of the Divine, being Will, Wisdom, and Intelligence. From the earliest of times, the number three has been associated with the Divine.

To the Sumerians, it suggested the deities Tammuz (Sun, fire), Enki (God of water & male fertility) and Inanna (Ishtar, Goddess of fertility and sexual love)

To the Babylonians Marduk (Water, Son of Ea), Ea (father, Sumerian Enki), Enlil (Air)

To the Egyptians 3 was the number of perfection, and represented Osiris, Isis and Horus.

To the Hindus it represented creation, preservation and renewal, or Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva.

To the Chinese it represented heaven, earth and water.

To Buddhists it speaks of the Buddha, Dharma (Law, Truth) and Sangha (community with a common goal practicing the good way, the upright way, the knowledgeable way).

To Persians it was Ormuzd (Ahura Mazda), Mithra and Apam Napat or Anahita (Water God).

To the Jews the triangle represented the three periods of existence, the past, present and future.

To the Greeks it was the Sacred Delta, the equilateral triangle became their letter Delta and in their Mythology referred to Zeus, Athens and Apollo.

To Christians it represents Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

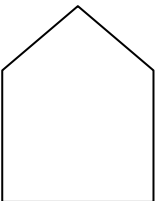
In Alchemy, the triangle with the point up \triangle is used as a symbol for the Masculine, the Spirit and Fire, while the triangle with the point down ∇ is symbol for the Feminine, the Soul, and Air.

The Trinities, or Father, Mother and Child images of ancient Gods like those of the Babylonians, Assyrians, Egyptians, Persians, Greeks and Romans, and even the various versions of a Trinity that have, over time, been associated with different groups of Christians are all representations of this number three.

This very early symbolism of Deity by the triangle has continued throughout the ages and Trinitarian schemes have been prevalent in all religions. The frequent recurrence of the number three in rituals of all types and from all sources is striking evidence of this.

The triangle has been seen as a symbol of the Divine and the Spirit since time immemorial.

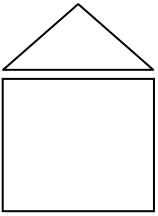
Five



With the flap raised, the outline of the Apron now has five points. In the jurisdictions where the Entered Apprentice wears the Apron with the flap up, it is considered "*a five cornered badge, indicating the five senses, by which means we enter into relations with the material world (our five points of fellowship with the material world).*"⁴

Five also brings to mind the five Noble Orders of Architecture.

⁴ Wilmschurst: The Meaning of Masonry



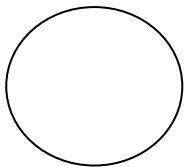
Seven

The flap of the apron when raised forms a triangle standing on a square. This was considered by the Egyptians as a most perfect figure, and is recorded as being an important symbol in the ceremonies of the Egyptian Mysteries. It is the symbol of Matter being under the Spirit, or of Matter presently being separate from the Spirit. It is the combination of the three of the Spirit and the four of the Body, making the “perfect” seven. This symbol, and its three dimensional equivalent of the pyramid on the cube, are both still seen in European Freemasonry, and in other initiatory organisations.

The number seven has been important to many civilisations. English Law (and its descendants) never attributed Moral or Legal responsibility to a child under seven years old, recognised the important physiological changes connected with puberty which was seen as occurring at age fourteen, and until recently denied civic responsibility until the age of twenty-one years. As they used to say “Three times seven makes a man”

Early Masonic rituals, notably the surviving fragments from the “Antients” rituals, required the Entered Apprentice to wear his apron with the flap pointing upwards, indicating that Divine Wisdom has not yet truly penetrated the gross matter of the body. In other words, the initiate has yet to combine the Spirit and the Body, and the Soul is still nowhere to be seen.

This method of wearing the Entered Apprentice apron is still used in parts of France, Germany, Scandinavia, America, and other places that descended from English Masonry before 1813.



Infinite, Eternal

A geometric figure cannot be made from one straight line, but allow that line to curve and you can create the eternal, never ending, never beginning circle. To the ancients, the circle suggested Divine consciousness, eternity and the eternal cycle, the idea that everything eventually returns to its source, to a point which precedes a new manifestation. It also represented the cycle of the human soul; the death and rebirth, or reincarnation. (the wheel of the Buddhists suggests a similar thought)

The strings or belt of the apron are thought of as forming a circle when the Apron is worn. When the belt is fitted with a snake hook it thus becomes a representation of a very special circle, an Ouroboros, or a snake eating its own tail.

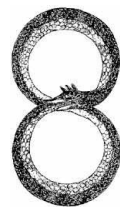
The earliest known depiction of an Ouroboros was found in the Egyptian Book of the Dead,⁵ where the self-begetting sun god, the Aten, is said to have ascended from the waters of chaos with the appearance of a snake, renewing himself every morning. It is believed to have been inspired by the Milky Way and indeed some ancient texts refer to an eternal serpent of light circling the heavens.



The Ouroboros represents the cyclical nature of existence, the seasons, the returning movements of the night sky, constant renewal, re-creation, eternal return, life out of death, reincarnation, and other cycles that are perceived to begin anew as soon as they end, like the Phoenix rising from the ashes of its own destruction. Sometimes it is shown as half black and half white, reminding us of several things, including the Taoist Yin-Yang symbol, which symbolises the duality of all things, and shows that the opposites blend together and work together and therefore, despite appearances, are not in conflict.

⁵ The *Book of the Dead* is the common name for the ancient Egyptian funerary texts more correctly known as “*The Book of Coming Forth By Day*”

It was, and is, an important mythological and religious symbol, and was used frequently in alchemical illustrations, where it symbolizes the circular nature of the alchemist's opus (work). It is often associated with Alchemy, Gnosticism and Hermeticism. It is a symbol of the eternal principles that are found in the Emerald Tablet of Hermes Trismegistus, or Thoth. As Above, So Below, to create the One: we are born from nature, we mirror it because we are a part of it, and eventually we return to it.



It is believed that this is also the origin of the mathematical symbol we use for infinity. ∞

The Ouroboros symbol has also been found in 14th and 15th century Albigensian (i.e. people from Albi, 85 Km NE of Toulouse) printing as watermarks. Because the Albigensians were seen by the Roman church as being closely associated with the Humanist movement, Gnosticism, and Arianism, they were therefore Heretics, and their heresy sparked an inquisition. Indeed, the Albigensian Crusade, or Cathar Crusade, was the only Crusade ever declared on fellow Christians by the Roman church (Pope Innocent III) who saw them as descendants of the Arian Gnostic Heresy that they had worked hard for centuries to extinguish, in fact ever since the AD325 Council of Nicaea.

The Crusade lasted 20 years from 1209 to 1229 and was instrumental in the formation of the Dominican Order of Preaching Friars, or OP (Ordo Praedicatorum), named after Dominic de Guzman, (San Domenico Guzman) who learned from the Cathars the effectiveness of wandering preachers. The Crusade also led to the creation of the Medieval Holy Roman Inquisition in Toulouse in 1229, but was obviously unable to rid the world of the Cathar / Albigensian / Bogomil Gnostic Heresy which still exists even today.

Albigensian Gnostic beliefs had their roots in the Pauline Bogomils of Bulgaria and the Pauline Christianity found in Armenia where Zoroastrianism and Mithras worship were also common. It is believed that the Ouroboros symbol entered their iconography via the Zoroastrian Faravahar symbol (see image at right), which in some versions features an Ouroboros around the waist.



The Fellowcraft Apron

Again from Wilmshurst:

“The inward development which the second degree symbolises is typified by the lowering of the triangular flap of the apron upon the rectangular portion below. It denotes ‘the progress we have made in the science’ or in other words it indicates that the higher nature of man, symbolised by the trinity of spirit, has descended into, and is now permeating, his lower nature. Hitherto, the spiritual part of his nature has, but hovered above him; he has been unconscious of its presence, but now having realised its existence, the nobler part of him descends into his lower nature, illuminating and enriching it.”

The Fellowcraft wears his Apron with the flap pointing down to indicate that wisdom has begun to enter and control the physical desires of the body, and that the Soul and body are now beginning to work together.

The addition of two rosettes to the Apron suggests a birds-eye-view of the two pillars, the duality, the balancing of exuberance and restraint, as used in the “two grand parallel lines” beside the Circumpunct. ☉ The display of only two rosettes also points out that the Fellowcraft is “yet one material point in the dark respecting Freemasonry” and requires the third rosette to form a triangle of the Spirit.

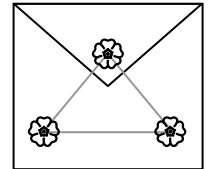
Some say that the rosettes indicate the progress being made in the science of regeneration and that the by the time he is a Fellowcraft, the Mason's spirituality is beginning to bud forth, blossoming as a rose, in his regenerated nature.

The Master Mason's Apron.

The Master Mason's Apron indicates the wearer has passed through the three degrees of purifying and self-perfecting, that he is able to govern the lodge within himself, he has squared, levelled, and harmonised his triple nature of Body, Soul, and Spirit.

In the first two degrees, the Apron contained no metal. The neophyte has, after all, been learning to divest himself of the base metals and transmute them into spiritual riches. By reaching the sublime degree, he now has an exuberance of metallic riches in the form of the tassels and the serpent clasp.

The addition of the third rosette now forms an upward pointing triangle, which penetrates the downward pointing triangle of the flap. The Pagan Masculine penetrating Feminine, the Alchemical Fire combining with Water, the Spirit and Soul coming together in the Master Mason.



The triangle of the flap and triangle of the rosettes form another square (or lozenge \diamond) where they overlap. This square represents matter, or the body. Thus we have the union of Body (square), the Soul (upper triangle) and the Spirit (lower triangle), or the Material, the Intellectual, and the Spiritual, or Earth, Water, and Fire. (Air being suggested by the Sky-blue of the ribbon around the edges of the square and the triangle.)

The Tassels.

The Master Mason's apron also has pendant strings and tassels. When the Apron was fastened by strings, they were passed around the waist and tied in the front under the flap, with the ends hanging down.

As shown in the photo of a lambskin Entered Apprentice Apron at right, it became the custom to decorate those ends with tassels.



The introduction of the more convenient belt removed the strings and their tassels, so the pendants were added, and are commonly referred to as strings, and the ends are referred to as tassels. The modern tassels are made using metal chains and seven balls.

Of the tassels Wilmshurst says:

“On either side of the Apron are seen two columns of light descending from above, streaming into the depths of his whole being, terminating in the seven-fold tassels which typify the seven-fold prismatic spectrum of the supernal (from the sky) Light.”

The seven balls, seven being the number of the Apron itself (4 + 3), refer us to:

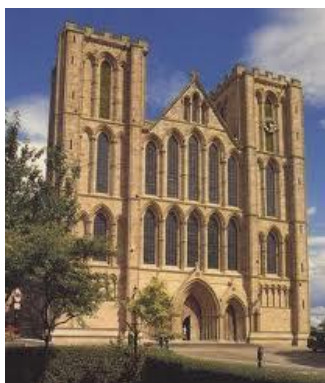
- The 7 liberal Arts and Sciences
- The 7 or more to make a lodge perfect
- The combined number of Matter (4) and Spirit (3)
- The sum of the Pythagoreans first two perfect figures (triangle + square)
- The 7 steps to approach the east in the third degree
- Jacobs ladder of seven rungs
- The 7 caverns of the Persian Mysteries
- The 7 branched candlestick of the Jews: which itself represents the central Sun and the six visible planets.

Both tassels together total 14 balls suggesting the Trinity of the Egyptian Mysteries. Fourteen was the number of pieces Osiris (Father) was cut up into and scattered across the land until eventually found by Isis (Mother) which then allowed her to conceive Horus (the dying and resurrecting Son)

Look down sometime

When looked at from the **point of view of the wearer**, the pendants (strings + tassels) of the Apron resemble two pillars rising out of a triangle of the Spirit (point upwards). Each pillar can be seen to have a capital (separated from the shaft of the pillar by a bar) with a network (chains) and Pomegranates (7 balls).

The two pillars rising out of the top of a triangle is a very common symbol and has been used for temples and other ceremonial buildings for millennia. Note the façades of the cathedrals of various ages below.



Ripon



Chartres



St Pauls



Tours

The Ribbon

The blue ribbon around the apron, not surprisingly, also has a symbolic meaning. In the VSL, Numbers Chapter 15, Verse 37-39 says:

“And the Lord spake unto Moses saying, speak unto the Children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes on the borders of their garments throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a ribband of blue. And it shall be unto you for a fringe, that you may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the Lord and do them.”

The ribbon on the Craft Apron is sky-blue or Cambridge University Blue,⁶ the colour used by the Parliamentarians when fighting King Charles. The darker blue used on Grand Aprons is Oxford Blue, also known as the modern Garter Blue, which was associated with the Royalists during the Civil War.

The lighter sky-blue is the colour used to identify the Virgin Mary (in paintings and other art), which was derived from the colour of the Egyptian Goddess Isis, and other ancient Goddesses.

Albert Mackay says the blue border was added as:

“the colour of the firmament enveloping the globe; emblematic of universal friendship and benevolence, instructing us that in the mind of a Freemason these virtues should be as extensive as the vault of Heaven itself.”

⁶ This lighter blue is the original Garter Blue. King George II changed the colour of the Order of the Garter to its present dark colour to distinguish the Garter Knights from the Knights of the exiled Stuarts.

The Tau

When, eventually, a Master Mason becomes Master of his Lodge, the rosettes of his apron are replaced by three Taus (sometimes referred to as levels). The Tau is an ancient symbol indeed, and is named after the Greek letter it resembles. It was widely used as a sacred symbol among the ancients.

Being closely tied to the Egyptian Ankh, the symbol of life, the Tau was placed on the Pharaoh's lips as part of the King Making Ceremony. The Hebrews used it as a sign of salvation and it is mentioned in the Torah and in the Old Testament book of Ezekiel. It was a mark worn by the devotees of Brahma. The Druids used it to symbolise their God. It is strongly identified with the astrological sign of Taurus. The Tau symbolised the Sumerian God, Tammuz, (the forerunner to the Roman God Mithras and the Greek Attis and Adonis), the consort of the Goddess Inanna (forerunner to Ishtar, Aphrodite, Venus, Dianna). Tammuz was associated with fishing and shepherding and as a solar god, his death and resurrection were celebrated every Spring Equinox (March).

The use of the Tau in Christianity dates to its very beginnings. Several branches of Christianity have always considered it to be the true shape of the cross of crucifixion and recent historical research is showing this to be most likely. Saint Francis of Assisi adopted it as his personal coat of arms after hearing Pope Innocent III talk about the Tau symbol and Saint Anthony of Padua bore a Tau cross on his cloak. It is still used a symbol of the Franciscan Order.

Like Christianity, other ancient societies who used the Tau symbol expanded its symbolism to include life, resurrection, and reincarnation which are sometimes further symbolised by a circle added to the top of the Tau. The Crux Ansata, (Cross with a handle) as it is termed, shown here is from a Coptic New Testament Book of Acts in the Codex Glazier. This circle is sometimes represented as a Rose emerging from the centre point of the Tau cross, or the Latin Cross in the case of the Rosicrucians (Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross). Members of the Ancient and Accepted Rite will be familiar with the Rose Cross (Rose Croix) symbol.



The Tau is also displayed in the “regular steps” which means we are effectively making a Tau cross with our feet (or “trampling on the cross” as the Templars were accused of doing)

You are invited to bear in mind that all meanings attributed to symbols are, to some extent, personal to the one who first defined it or the group to which it had a specific meaning. A particular explanation or meaning may resonate to some brothers, but perhaps not to others. Over time we all see and hear different meanings attributed to our symbols, and a Freemason who understands the true nature of his craft would not allow himself to reject out-of-hand the meaning or explanation assigned by any group, society or Brother, but look at that meaning to see if there is something in it for him; perhaps different, perhaps modified, but meaningful for him.