

Mystical Characteristics



Province of Essex

Introduction

This short lecture gives an explanation of the Triple Tau and the Triangle

The Triple Tau

In the Royal Arch ritual the Sojourners (journeymen masons), on preparing the ground for the foundation of the Second Temple, discover a block of white marble wrought in the form of an altar of incense, a doubled cube. On the front were engraved certain initials with a mark or character beneath which we refer to as the Triple Tau.

This mark, the 'Triple Tau' is a combination of 'three taus', the tau being the nineteenth letter of the Greek alphabet, corresponding with the twentieth letter of the English alphabet, our letter 'T'.

There is also a cross known as a tau-cross; it is shaped exactly like the letter 'T' and is not only a Christian but is also a pre-historic symbol not known to Craft, Royal Arch or Mark Masons, but has a prominent place in certain other Masonic degrees.

The 'Triple Tau' in Royal Arch is made up of three Ts. In the eighteenth century it was illustrated by a T over H and was said to be an abbreviation for *Templum Hierosolymæ*, a Latin term for the Temple of Jerusalem and was used by Thomas Dunckerley, the illegitimate son of George II who became a prominent and trusted member of the Premier Grand Lodge (the 'Moderns') in the mid 1700s.

After the union of the Grand Chapters of the 'Moderns' and 'Antients' in 1817 and more particularly after the RA Ritual was drastically revised in 1834/35, the symbol ceased to be shown as T over H and became three Ts – the Triple Tau as we know it today.

The Triangle

The Sacred Delta, the equilateral triangle is one of the most ancient symbols in the world. It has but one single meaning in Masonry, thereby differing from all other Masonic symbols. It is the ancient symbol referring to God, the Grand Geometrician and Great Overseer of the Universe, to whom we must all submit and most humbly to adore.

As Royal Arch Masons we are all familiar with the equilateral triangle which is formed by the three great Lights in the Chapter. Some 200 years ago a similar triangle could be seen in a Craft Lodge. This triangle was also formed by three Lights placed on the floor in the centre of the Lodge and within that equilateral triangle was placed the opened VSL.

Whilst this triangle has now disappeared from English Lodges (except in Bristol) it may still be seen in some other countries

However, because his Office is wholly spiritual, the equilateral triangle is still featured on the Craft

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Lodge Chaplain's Collar Jewel. No other Craft Lodge Officer's Jewel features the triangle, whether in Lodge or Provincial Grand Lodge, but there is one exception in Grand Lodge as it is featured on the Collar Jewel of the Most Worshipful Grand Master. An illustration of this jewel is shown in the Book of Constitutions. It should be of especial interest to all Installed First Principals, who, on studying it, will be reminded of that point in their Installation when they were instructed with the sign of a First Principal.

The equilateral Triangle does, of course, feature greatly in a Royal Arch Chapter: by the 3 Principals at the opening and closing, with the circle on the plate of Gold, by the 3 Principals using their Sceptres for the obligation of a Candidate and on every Officer's Collar Jewel.