



PROVINCIAL GRAND LODGE OF SOMERSET

The Sword or Tyler's Jewel

Brethren, we should remember that everything in Masonry is symbolic and therefore has a meaning, sometimes more than one meaning or something that is open to interpretation. The Sword or Tyler's Jewel is no different.

(Have the WM summon the Tyler and present the sword to him for all to see).

The sword can lay claim to being the second oldest weapon in mans' armoury, flint stone providing the first cutting edge, which can be traced back to prehistoric times until the discovery of copper. Copper was the first of metals used to produce weaponry but its soft nature led to others being tried over time. The use of the sword can be traced as far back as 1400BC in Asia; however use today is mainly for ceremonial or sporting purpose.

During the middle-ages being a craftsman rather than a peasant meant the difference between living comfortably or living from meal to meal. Skill in a trade was something that had to be paid for by years of apprenticeship at a very low wage, which led to these arts being well kept secrets. Something that when disclosed, even emblematically in a lodge or guild, required protection from intruders or cowans, otherwise some partially skilled person might imperfectly learn some of the arts leading to bad workmanship bringing the craft into disrepute. Disclosure to only those to whom the skill should be passed onto was secured by use of the sword.

When the crusades were taking place, the sword was the principal weapon of protection. The knights of that time used the sword to restore Jerusalem to its Christian sovereignty and as such became a symbol of rank within the military. Thus the sword became significant for those who acknowledge the Christian faith. However, whilst we all acknowledge belief in god, not all acknowledge Christ as the supreme-being. Therefore the sword might be accepted as a method of protecting our secret rites rather than it holding any Christian significance at all.

In modern times the sword used by the Tyler is one of ordinary form but until comparatively recently the shape was wavy and made in allusion to the flaming sword which was placed at the east of the garden of Eden, which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life. Nehemiah gave orders to the builders at the broken down walls of Jerusalem to work with swords at their sides to prevent any surprise. It is therefore without scabbard because the sword should ever be drawn and ready for the defence of the Tyler's post.

The Tyler's jewel, including that on his collar is therefore the sword, which during the Installation ceremony we are told symbolically teaches us to keep a watch on the entrance of our thoughts, place a guard at the door of our lips and post a sentinel at the avenue of our actions. The tact of the Tyler and his assurance whilst guarding the door of the lodge should allow us to pass safely from the outside world toward knowledge and mysteries of the Craft whilst we all guard against cowan and intruders.