

THE ANCIENT* LANDMARKS OF THE ORDER

*Throughout I have used the spelling “Ancient” rather than “Antient.”

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Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set. Proverbs 22: 28

What are the Landmarks?

How many are there and where are they defined?

I turn for guidance, first to the Book of Constitutions of the United Grand Lodge of England, which states in:

Rule 4: “The Grand Lodge possesses the supreme super-intending authority and alone has the inherent power of enacting laws and regulations for the government of the Craft, and of altering, repealing and abrogating them, always taking care that the ancient Landmarks of the Order be preserved.”¹

Rule 55 “If it shall appear to the Grand Master that any proposed resolution contains anything contrary to the ancient Landmarks of the Order, he may refuse to permit the same to be discussed.”¹

Rule 111 “Every Master Elect, before being passed to the Chair, shall solemnly pledge himself to preserve the Landmarks of the Order.”¹

Rule 125(b) “No Brother who is not subject to the Grand Lodge shall be admitted unless his Certificate shows that he has been initiated according to the ancient rites and ceremonies in a Lodge belonging to a Grand Lodge professing belief in TGAOTU..... nor unless he himself shall acknowledge that this belief is an essential Landmark of the Order”¹

These are the only references to the Ancient Landmarks in the Book of Constitutions and there is no defined list therein, so all we can determine so far is that **a professed belief in TGAOTU** is an Ancient Landmark of the Order and the only one specifically defined as such by the United Grand Lodge of England.

Perhaps we can obtain further guidance from our ritual. A version of ritual from the Emulation Lodge of Improvement was first published by George Claret in 1833 and Taylor’s working first emerged in 1908. It was not until January 1967 that Harry Carr, then secretary of Quatuor Coronati Lodge No. 2076 presided over a meeting to agree on a standard form of wording, which led to the first edition of Emulation Ritual in 1969.²

Referring to the current Emulation Ritual book, before a candidate is initiated the Worshipful Master asks a number of questions requiring an affirmative response before proceeding, including:

“... are you a free man and of the full age of twenty-one years?”³

The candidate must also confirm:

“ if once admitted, you will afterwards act and abide by the ancient usages and established customs of the order”³

and it is not until the Charge, after his Initiation that the new Brother is instructed that his:

“fidelity must be exemplified by a strict observance of the Constitutions of the fraternity, by adhering to the ancient landmarks of the Order...”³

There are no further specific references to the Landmarks in our ceremonies until the Installation Ceremony, when the Master Elect is charged that he must be:

“well skilled in the Ancient Charges, Regulations and Landmarks of the Order.”³

So far then we have only identified that a candidate cannot be admitted unless he professes a belief in TGAOTU and that he is “a free man and of the full age of twenty-one years.”

Is this latter requirement a Landmark? I think only in part, since in certain cases the age criterion is relaxed by dispensation. Perhaps it is only the requirement that he should be a “free man”, that is a Landmark. But what is a “free man?” Is it one who is not bonded to the land or a trade; one who is not imprisoned; or one who is free-born i.e. not a slave?

The issue of being “free-born” is portrayed in the additional explanation of the Second Degree Tracing Board⁴ where Jephtha was expelled from his father’s house, because he was Gilead’s son by a concubine; saying:

“Thinkest thou, who was the son of a bond-woman, to inherit with us who are free born?”⁴

Jephtha was forced to try and find his fortune in the foreign land of Tob, where he raised himself to be the leader of a small army. His successes were such that the Elders of his native country were persuaded to make him their Chief General or Governor for life.

This is an example of how a man who is not free-born, the son of a bond-woman, was not considered worthy to inherit from his father.

The Lectures of the Three Degrees states that a “Free and Accepted Mason ought to be:

“A free man, born of a free woman, brother to a King, fellow to a Prince – or to a beggar, if a Mason and found worthy.”⁵

and in answer to the question “Why Free Born?” there is a reference to Abraham’s remonstrance to his wife Sarah, concerning Ishmael, the son of Hagar:

“Put away that bond woman and her son, for such as he shall not inherit with the free-born even with my son Isaac fearing that if the two youths were brought up together, Isaac might imbibe some of Ishmael’s slavish principles”⁵

Although the lecture does go on to say that since:

“.....in the present day, slavery being generally abolished, it has therefore been considered under our Constitution, that if a man be free, although he may not have been free-born, he is eligible to be made a Mason.”⁵ since:

“We are all created equal, which is strengthened by our Masonic Obl.”⁵

Then, subsequently in the Second Section, following the question “Why are the privileges of Masonry restricted to free men?” There is the answer:

“That the vicious habits of slavery might not contaminate the true principles of freedom on which the Order is founded.”⁶

These statements, to me, make uncomfortable reading and appear to discount the view that the definition probably derived from operative masonry, where it was a requirement that the candidate should not be in bonded labour.

In either event, these may have been strict requirements in the past, but cannot be considered, in my opinion, rigid enough conditions now to be defined as a Landmark.

According, therefore, to our Book of Constitutions and to our Ritual, a person can be admitted to Freemasonry and progress to installation as Worshipful Master, having only acknowledged one Ancient Landmark of the Order, that of a requisite belief in TGAOTU.

The difficulty of defining the Landmarks has been hotly debated since the formation of the first Grand Lodge in 1713. Perhaps because of this being such a contentious subject The United Grand Lodge of England has gone no further than defining the single Landmark quoted above, although this has not been the case overseas, particularly in the U.S.A.

Before we consider some of these attempts at a more extensive definition of the Landmarks, let us step back to the formation of the first Grand Lodge in 1713 and its immediate aftermath.

Our own Book of Constitutions is a frequently amended derivative from Anderson's Constitutions of 1723, which itself only makes a passing reference to the Ancient Landmarks, in the statements:

“A Mason is oblig'd by his Tenure, to obey the moral law; and if he rightly understands the Art, he will never be a stupid Atheist nor an irreligious Libertine.

Every Annual GRAND-LODGE has an inherent Power and Authority to make new regulations, or to alter these, for the real benefit of this ancient Fraternity: Provided always that the old Landmarks be carefully preserv'd.”⁷

Furthermore, Rule 4 of the Book of Constitutions makes it clear that only the United Grand Lodge of England can amend the laws and regulations for the government of the Craft. This has not prevented, however, other Grand Lodges formulating their own rules and regulations, which are not always consistent with the UGLE and the single Landmark defined by the UGLE – that of a requisite belief in TGAOTU. For this reason the various Grand Lodges subscribe to a system of mutual recognition, whereby they each consider the other “Regular” or “Irregular”, or in amity with each other.

For example, the Grand Orient de France declares that: “*it works for the material and moral improvement of humanity, towards intellectual and social perfection*”⁸, whilst considering itself a humanistic fraternity, not requiring its members to profess a belief in a supreme being. The UGLE considers that the Grand Orient de France has infringed Rules 111 and 125(b), by not acknowledging the one essential Landmark of the Order; that it is, therefore, irregular and is not in amity with it.

Some other Grand Lodges recognise different quantities of Landmarks, so let us first of all try to understand what a landmark is.

In ancient times, it was the custom to mark the boundaries of lands by means of stone pillars, the removal of which by malicious persons would be the occasion of much confusion. These “landmarks” were the only way by which men could distinguish the limits of their property. To remove them, therefore, was considered a most serious crime. Jewish law says:

“Thou shalt not remove thy neighbours' landmark, which they of old time have set in thine inheritance.”⁹

Hence landmarks may be considered those peculiar marks by which we are able to designate our inheritance, such that they define what is being passed on to us.⁹

If we look back to the time of Operative Masonry, Thomas Carr of Michigan states that:

“The original landmarks (of Operative Masons) were lines or cords which were laid from the centre point of the four corner points and were carried on beyond the corner of the intended structure, and marked by landmarks, so that if the corner point were at all displaced it might be immediately seen and rectified.”¹⁰

Speculative Freemasonry evolved from operative Freemasonry at a time when virtually none of the practices were written down. Everything was committed to memory and communicated by word of mouth. It was, therefore, important to preserve the important customs and ideology of Freemasonry through symbology and the recognition of important aspects, key points, or landmarks, so that they could be transmitted onwards and preserved for future generations of speculative Freemasons. This speculative Masonry naturally developed into a more intellectually based organisation, where the earlier rigid requirement of being free-born was relaxed and the severe penalties of divulging Masonic secrets became in due course entirely symbolic.

William Preston, in his 1772 *Illustrations of Masonry*, clearly uses "Landmarks" as synonymous with established usages and customs of the Masonic Craft. He refers to the ritual of the Master Mason's Degree as the preservation of the ancient "landmarks."¹¹

Speculative Freemasons have made many other attempts at defining Masonic Landmarks. One of the earliest attempts was by Albert Mackey¹² in 1858 who stated that “*the unwritten laws and customs of Masonry are its Landmarks,*” and that these should have immemorial antiquity, universality and permanence. On this basis he listed 25 qualifying Landmarks. These are summarised overleaf and have become widely accepted as a basis for attempts to define Masonic Landmarks by others.

Mackey was from South Carolina and it is of note that that State, along with 17 others has adopted these 25 Landmarks. Albert Bede, in his comprehensive review of *The Landmarks of Freemasonry*¹³ quotes the late David Foulkes, of Research Lodge of Oregon, who found 18 states had adopted Mackey's 25, two had designated the Ancient Charges as the Landmarks, 10 had compiled lists of their own and 12 had recognised no list.

The State of Georgia, for example, lists, explains and attempts to prove a total of 54 Ancient Landmarks and then goes on to quote Mackey's list of 25. After stating that “no two authors agree in the enumeration of the *Landmarks* and no attempt to state all the *Landmarks* correctly has been universally accepted by the Craft,” Georgia's Masonic Manual goes on to say that Mackey's *Landmarks* have “been very generally recognised in the Craft of all the States as correct.”¹⁴

Mackey's list of Landmarks ¹²

1	Modes of recognition
2	Division of symbolic Masonry into three degrees
3	Legend of the 3rd degree
4	Government of the fraternity by a Grand Master
5	Prerogative of the Grand Master to preside over every assembly of the Craft
6	Prerogative of the Grand Master to grant dispensations for conferring the degrees at irregular times
7	Prerogative of the Grand Master to give dispensations for opening and holding Lodges
8	Prerogative of the Grand Master to make Masons at sight
9	Necessity for Masons to congregate in Lodges
10	Government of lodges by a Master and Two Wardens
11	Necessity of tiling lodges
12	Right of every Mason to be represented in all general meetings of the Craft and to instruct representatives
13	Right of every Mason to appeal from his Lodge to the Grand Lodge or General Assembly of Masons
14	Right of every Mason to visit and sit in every regular Lodge
15	No unknown visitor can enter a Lodge without first passing an examination
16	No Lodge can interfere in the business of another Lodge or give degrees to brethren of other Lodges
17	Every Freemason is amenable to the laws and regulations of the Masonic jurisdiction in which he resides, even though he may not be a member of any Lodge
18	Candidates for initiation must be men, un-mutilated, free born, and of mature age. Not a woman, a cripple, or a slave
19	Belief in the existence of God as the Great Architect of the universe
20	Belief in a resurrection to a future life
21	A "Book of the Law" is indispensable in every Lodge
22	Equality of all Masons
23	Secrecy of the institution
24	Foundation of a speculative science upon an operative art, and symbolic use and explanations for the purpose of religious or moral teaching
25	These landmarks can never be changed

Many Masonic authors have questioned Mackey's list of Landmarks, one of the most significant being Roscoe Pound, who was Dean of Harvard Law School. He proposed his own, shorter list.¹⁵

Roscoe Pound's list of landmarks:

1	Belief in God
2	Belief in the persistence of personality -- the immortality of the soul
3	A "book of the law" as an indispensable part of the lodge
4	Legend of the 3rd degree
5	Secrecy
6	Symbolism of the operative art
7	A Mason must be a man, free born, and of age

Pound also stated that the following could be considered Landmarks:¹⁶

8	Government of a lodge by a Master and Wardens
9	Right of a Mason to visit

Taking these 9 possible Landmarks, we can see that Pound has retained, with some modifications, Mackey's Landmarks 3, 10, 14, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23, and 24. He has, though, eliminated Landmarks 1 and 2 which many would consider fundamental to Freemasonry and he has not retained Landmark 25 which states that the Landmarks can never be changed.

Addressing the question, 'What constitutes a Masonic Landmark?' Harry Carr, Past Master and Secretary of Quatuor Coronati Lodge No. 2076, specifies two essential points:¹⁷

- A Landmark must have existed from the time whereof the memory of man runneth not to the contrary.
- A Landmark is an element in the form or essence of the Society of such importance that Freemasonry would no longer be Freemasonry if it were removed.

Adopting these principles, Carr produces his list of Landmarks:¹⁷

1	Professed belief in the existence of a Supreme Being
2	The Volume of the Sacred Law is an essential and indispensable part of the Lodge, and must be open when the Lodge is at work
3	A Mason must be a man, free by birth, and of mature age
4	A Mason owes allegiance to the Sovereign and to the Craft
5	Professed belief in the immortality of the soul

This list of Landmarks retains four of Pound’s Landmarks (1, 2, 3 and 7), whilst introducing “allegiance to the Sovereign and to the Craft” and removing Landmarks 4, 5, 6, 8 and 9.

Gerald Gibbs ¹⁸ carefully examines these (and other) assertions and produces a revised list which includes two of Carr’s definitions (1 and 5) and one of his own (2 below):

1	A belief in the existence of a Supreme Being
2	A belief in the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man
3	A belief in the immortality of the soul

Both Carr and Gibbs have swept away those definitions of Mackey which cover administrative, organisational and governance issues. Gibbs makes the distinction between Landmarks involving “belief” and “Landmark Decisions.” He quotes the following as landmark decisions, whilst they appear to me as basic criteria:

- That a Volume of the Sacred Law be present, opened on an altar when the Lodge is at labour
- The observance of secrecy and that
- The petitioner must be a man, freeborn and of mature age.

I am sympathetic though to the principle of Landmark decisions and would suggest that the decision to unite the Premier Grand Lodge with the Antients’ Grand Lodge, to produce the United Grand Lodge of England in 1813, could certainly be deemed a Landmark decision.

Bernard E. Jones ^{19 & 20} suggests that we should see Landmarks as something fundamental, from time immemorial, which can be discovered, but not created, changed, altered, improved, or obliterated. He goes on to suggest that:

“All thinking freemasons will want to make their own search for what they will regard as the Landmarks, and that what the Brother finds may not exactly agree with what another may discover”.

Botelho goes on to add (agreeing with Carr):

“Would freemasonry remain essentially the same for him were his ‘Landmark’ altered or removed? ¹¹

Athena Stafyla (a PhD student at the University of Munich) states that:

“The landmarks of Masonry are those principles by which the Craft is bounded, that is, marked off from all other societies and associations and without which it would lose its identity.” ²¹

A more cynical comment is made by Robert Freke Gould:

"Of the ancient landmarks it has been observed with more or less foundation of truth: 'Nobody knows what they comprise or omit as they are of no earthly authority, because everything is a landmark when an opponent desires to silence you; but nothing is a landmark that stands in his own way.'" ¹⁰

So, we have a morass of Landmarks, of which Gerald Gibbs frustratingly remarks "*Pandora's Box was filled with Landmarks. Landmarks? Landmarks!*", whilst he reviews various attempts, principally in the U.S.A. to enumerate them, before himself concluding:

"It would seem that if we are to continue to work universally together in perfect unanimity and concord, each one of us must choose those Landmarks that are Masonically meaningful to him, which conform to his own more intimate personal perceptions." ¹⁸

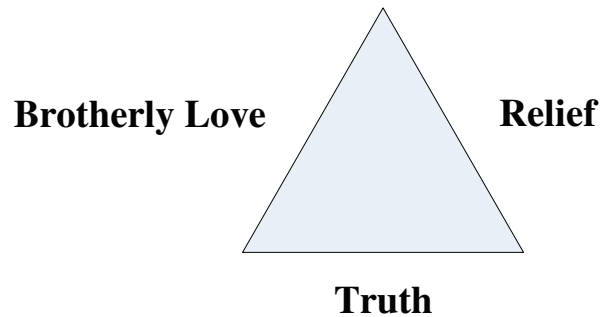
Undaunted, having opened this Pandora's Box, taking Bro. Gibbs advice and using Carr's two criteria as guidelines, I offer my own suggestions as Landmarks:

1	A belief in the existence of a Supreme Being
2	Pure Ancient Masonry consists of three degrees and no more, viz, those of the Entered Apprentice, The Fellow Craft, and the Master Mason, including the Supreme Order of the Holy Royal Arch
3	The Grand Principles of Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth
4	Freemasonry is a peculiar system of morality, portrayed by allegory and illustrated by symbols
5	A need for secrecy

My first Landmark has been included because it is fundamental and the ONLY landmark specified by the UGLE.

My second, to me, defines the essential components of Freemasonry. There are other orders, some of which I belong to, but to me they are not *essential* components. Most importantly, I include the Holy Royal Arch as a component part of the three degrees of Pure Ancient Masonry. To me, this is essential since the Holy Royal Arch Degree follows on naturally from the Third Degree Ceremony in Craft Masonry, whilst setting it in the context of eternity, prompting the Mason to ponder on the immortality of his own soul and TGAOTU.

My third definition does not appear in this form in any other list that I have reviewed, but to me the Grand Principles Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth have established themselves as Landmarks. I would go further; I believe that these three principles are and should be maintained as equal and essential components of a triad.



Indeed, I feel that the status of “Truth” in this triad has become somewhat neglected and should be restored to equality with the other two components, to return it to its proper place within speculative Freemasonry.

Kai Hughes, Grand Orator of the United Grand Lodge of England, identifies Truth as “the forgotten Principle” in an article in *Freemasonry Today*.²⁵ He goes on to state that the grand principle of Truth is “the key to the philosophy of Freemasonry” and through this we are able to discover our own potential and prepare our mind to reach a higher level of spiritual consciousness.

As Jago and Tuck state in a recent Oration for the Holy Royal Arch,²⁶ much has been lost over the past 250 years, as Masonry has concentrated on Brotherly Love and Relief and placed less emphasis on the ancient mysteries codified as Truth. They go on to say that the ritual contains a great spiritual message that will enable every Companion to complete his Masonic journey of personal enlightenment and truly be able to fulfil the instruction of the Oracle of Delphi – “Man know yourself.” Whilst this comment is made in a Royal Arch Oration, I believe that it is equally valid in a wider Masonic context.

Truth in a Masonic context is more than “honesty” and “integrity.” It involves a search for knowledge and through this learning process, continual self improvement is achieved. In turn, this self improvement leads to improved personal relationships and service within the community. It facilitates a personal understanding of our place within society and our relationship with TGAOTU. In short, it is the essential methodology in the frequently repeated objective of “making good men better men.”

The “Truth” component is the key to unlocking the door to the other two components of “Brotherly Love” and “Relief.” Without Truth in its proper place we do not realise and justify the lessons taught in our Masonic degrees. It is what defines Freemasonry and distinguishes it from other worthy organisations such as Rotary.

My fourth definition defines Freemasonry as a “peculiar system of morality, portrayed by allegory and illustrated by symbols.” In this context “peculiar” means “unique” rather than “unusual.” Without these wonderful allegories and their many symbols we would not be able to follow a system of morality. Freemasonry would, in my opinion, lose its identity. The allegories, symbols and moral structure of Freemasonry are vital fundamental components, uniquely characterising it.

I have included a need for secrecy as my fifth landmark. I have some reservations here because I feel that we continue to have too much secrecy within our organisation. In practice, the only elements of enforced secrecy are certain passwords and modes of recognition. Our rituals are published and available for inspection by non Freemasons. It is desirable that our rituals remain private, in order to maximise the impact and sense of revelation to candidates passing through them, but since they are already in the public domain, we cannot say that they should remain secret.

I believe that we can go much further in reducing the perception of secrecy to those not involved with Freemasonry. Happily we have a new spirit of “openness” being promulgated, which, in my opinion, is a step in the right direction. I would like to see this “openness” developed further, for example:

- With a more energetic defence of our integrity and values in the media and everyday life,
- A greater exhibition of our organisation’s contribution to society, in each of the three Grand Principles of the order.
- A more active participation of Freemasons in public occasions.

Barker-Cryer quotes an example ²³ where Masons attended parish church with their ladies on the day of the lodge Installation Ceremony. Also, he mentions that the True and Unity Lodge No. 360 in Brixham, after closing their lodge on St. John’s Day in 1811 “proceeded to church in procession wearing regalia ‘with their wives or such female friend they may chuse (sic) to bring with them’ afterwards adjourning to the lodge room for dinner.”

Our church and cathedral services which we attend in full regalia are perhaps the only occasions where we display ourselves publicly as Freemasons, but why cannot there be more? Why cannot we follow the example of True and Unity Lodge in 1811?

What happened to public foundation/corner stone laying, parades, or even Masonic funerals? Should we not actively seek to publicise our Masonic activities to a greater extent? Tentative steps are being taken at Grand Lodge and Provincial levels, but perhaps constraints should be relaxed further, with a greater encouragement to increase public awareness at a local level.

Only we as individuals can do this, and it requires the support of our Masonic superiors. I also recognise that until some of the negative impressions and prejudices regarding Freemasonry have been dispelled, it will be difficult for many of our members to be as “open” as desired within their own businesses and communities.

Hopefully, when we have re-built the reputation of Freemasonry through these efforts we can replace it on the pillar of respectability, integrity and honesty that it deserves.

There is no doubt, however, that secrecy is a fundamental component of Freemasonry and to remove it would lesson the mystique for those involved and take away much of the incentive to progress along the Masonic journey. Without it we would undoubtedly lose

much of the interest and magic of our wonderful ceremonies. Who amongst us can forget the excitement of being initiated, the drama of being raised and the wonder of the Royal Arch ceremony? It is this process of revelation which stimulates our progress along the journey of becoming better men and serving the community. It is an integral part of Freemasonry and must remain a Landmark.

I have dropped from my list the following:

(i)	Candidates should be free men, of mature age and sound judgement
(ii)	A belief in the immortality of the soul

I assert that Freemasonry should be open to all individuals of mature age, including women. In fact, I believe that it is already such. Women currently belong to organisations such as the *Order of Women Freemasons* and the *International Order of Co-Freemasonry, Le Droit Humain*. Whilst these organisations exist independently from the UGLE and are not formally recognised, their practices are deemed regular.²⁴

Barker Cryer quotes several amusing incidents²² where females have been initiated into Freemasonry in order to safeguard Masonic secrets “accidentally” obtained. In looking to the future he suggests that wives and relatives of Freemasons should participate more fully in our movement and that they deserve to be more involved. As a step in this direction he asserts that “The time surely has come when we recognise the Order of Women Freemasons.”

Whilst I concur with this assertion, I must stress that I would not personally advocate a move to a system of mixed male/female lodges. I do not feel that at this time we are ready for such a radical step. We could, however, mutually recognise each others lodges and perhaps, in certain circumstances permit inter-visiting.

The second Landmark that I have dropped is a belief in the immortality of the soul. Whilst we do not demand this as a belief of prospective candidates, it is a vital component of our Third Degree Ceremony and the Royal Arch Ceremony and as such, I contend, is adequately covered by my Second Landmark.

But what do you believe?

What would you establish as the Landmarks of Freemasonry?

A.D. Matthews

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- 23 Revd. Neville Barker Cryer, *Did you know this, too? Women and Freemasonry*, Lewis Masonic, 2005
- 24 Statement in UGLE Quarterly Communication 10 March 1999. *“There exist in England and Wales at least two Grand Lodges solely for women. Except that these bodies admit women, they are, so far as can be ascertained, otherwise regular in their practice. There is also one which admits both men and women to membership. They are not recognised by this Grand Lodge and intervisitation may not take place. There are, however, discussions from time to time with the women's Grand Lodges on matters of mutual concern. Brethren are therefore free to explain to non-Masons, if asked, that Freemasonry is not confined to men (even though this Grand Lodge does not itself admit women). Further information about these bodies may be obtained by writing to the Grand Secretary.”*
- 25 Kai Hughes, Grand Orator of the United Grand Lodge of England in *“Truth – The Forgotten Principle.”* Freemasonry Today, Number 12 Autumn 2010.
- 26 Roger H. Jago/Geoffrey W. Tuck *“An explanation of the Final Step in Pure Antient Freemasonry”* (Oration to be delivered in Royal Arch Chapters in the Province of Hampshire and Isle of Wight)