

The Masonic Cipher Nugget

It appears that many Masons are not familiar with this cipher nor that during the 18th and 19th centuries, its use was fairly wide-spread.

Any coded message is designed to conceal its meaning to all except the sender and recipients who hold the key to unlock it. Without that key the message should remain unintelligible.

There is a need for Masons to protect their secrets, even in their writings. We must not indite, carve, mark, engrave or otherwise them delineate on anything movable or immovable under the canopy of heaven. Ciphers were an excellent tool for Freemasons to write these secrets and not violate their obligation and were once quite commonplace. But nowadays this code is hardly ever practised; although an example of this very code does appear in almost every lodge in England and probably every single one of you here has seen it, though some of you may not have recognised it for what it is, or what it means.

If you refer to Plate 1 on the handout, you find a set of cipher characters together with their equivalent letters from the standard alphabet.

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	
J	U	L	3	0	C	7	0	7	J	W	L	3	0	C	7	0	7	J	W	L	3	0	C	7	0	7

If you refer to Plate 2 you will observe a standard Emulation 3rd Deg Tracing Board and scattered around it can be found several cipher characters.

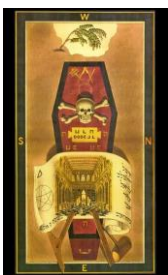


Plate 3 shows where the ciphers can be found, it also identifies them and gives their transliterations, for which each row should be read separately.



⌋	<	A	U
⌋	⌋	B	C H
⌋	⌋	0002 J C	
⌋	⌋	B O	B O

I think you will agree these transliteration letters are rather meaningless, that is because the creator of this tracing board has introduced a twist to the way the cipher code is depicted.

But before we look at how this twisted code was devised, it is worth being reminded of how Masons, depict dates by adding 4,000 to the commonly stated date. i.e. 2020AD become 6020AL. The letters AL signifying Anno Lucis which means "in the year of light" or alternatively "since the creation of the world". Also that Hebrew text is read from right to left. On this Tracing Board not only are these ciphers depicted left to right, but additionally, they are mirror image.

Plate 4 shows a mirror image of the Tracing board, together with the new ciphers and a four-digit number which is clearly 3000.



>	L	T	C
⌋	⌋	H	A B
⌋	3000	A L 3000	
⌋	⌋	M B	M B

These cipher transliterations can now be related to key aspects of the 3rd Degree: The top two letters T and C; relate to the p.w. leading to the 3rd Degree and which character was the first artificer in metals.

The letters HAB refer to the architect of KST, our noble Master whose death is described in the 3rd Degree ceremony.

Regarding the letters AL and the number 3000: The Traditional History tells of the untimely death of our Master HAB, who was slain three thousand years after the creation of the world, i.e. 3000AL, or AL3000 as it appears here.

Finally, the letters M and B. represent the substituted word in the Raising , Ceremony which are communicated to each candidate with the f.p.o.f.

The reason why two words are given is that prior to Union in 1813, we had two Masonic Grand Lodges, the Antients and the Moderns. The Antients had their word, while the Moderns had a slightly different one. Upon the formation of the Union it was decided to keep both words, which we are still using 200 years later.

So there we have it brethren, the salient points of the 3rd Degree ceremony are depicted on the 3rd Degree Tracing Board, in just a hand full of symbols.

WBro Bob Codling

Keystone Lodge No. 363