

INAUGURAL ADDRESS

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Over the past several months, in the lead up to this evening's special event, my awareness and concern regarding the obligatory requirement to present some form of address at this point, became increasingly acute. Being mindful that, as well as being of a Masonic nature, its relativity to a Lodge of Research should not be too obscure and while it would be excusable for its depth and breadth to be comprehensive, its length should be preferably moderate.

Lodge Waikaremoana, while taking its name from a well known lake in the Wairoa District, is not situated near it and, seemingly, there is no other particular relevance to it, either real or implied. The only parallel that could be drawn is that within its ranks there are members who are susceptible to encouragement, who have learnt little from past experiences and, owing to apparent gullibility, often find themselves attempting to navigate in situations of similarly unfathomable depths.

Brethren, tonight's foray into only recently charted waters is, in part, a resume of a presentation given at Waikaremoana's regular July meeting, the birth of which evolved from what was felt, for some time, to be an unsatisfactory situation in the Lodge. This narrative was defined by the uninspired title, *An Explanation of Some Aspects of the First Degree*, to which the introduction went as follows: -

"WM and Brethren and most especially Brother A——. There can be little doubt that from the moment we enter the Masonic fraternity, and regardless of how far we choose to progress within its ranks, we have directed at us and are subjected to, a huge volume of dialogue in the form of charges and so-called explanations. Few however, if any, would quarrel with the suggestion that gaps often exist in our understanding and that some explanations raise as many questions as they provide answers. As individuals, whether or not an attempt is made to seek further information depends on ones curiosity, enthusiasm and determination to do so. Again, I suggest that many don't for various reasons, as in my own case, not wanting to be perceived as being slow to comprehend. Let's just hope that eventually it will all make sense. Better to be thought a fool than open one's mouth and prove it.

For some time a group within this lodge have felt there is a need to provide our new members with additional information concerning the ceremonies of the three degrees, preferably between the degrees and therefore prior to being bombarded with further unfamiliar and confusing material.

This initiative is an attempt to fill that need. It is something never previously attempted in this lodge and neither, to my knowledge, in any other lodge. Although some do advertise *Lodges of Instruction* on their notice papers, further enquiry reveals that to be a misleading title for a practice or rehearsal meeting.

In order to fully absorb and appreciate the underlying principles and philosophies of Freemasonry, it is necessary to possess in your mind these factors: -

1. An awareness and understanding
 2. An acceptance
 3. A firm conviction
- An awareness and understanding that our origins lie with the stonemasons of several hundred years ago.
 - An acceptance of one of the theories as to how the Freemasonry of today began evolved from there.
 - Finally, but most importantly, be at peace in our own minds with a firm conviction, that regardless of opponents and detractors, our institution is not only one of the most ancient, but is indeed one of the most honourable and worthy in existence.

Being confident that all of those ingredients reside in you, we can proceed."

Brethren, the recipient was an Entered Apprentice who had been admitted only the previous month. The steps of his initiation ceremony were then retraced, beginning outside the door of the lodge, with the reason for, and the meaning of, everything that would have appeared foreign to him, being dissected and elaborated upon. There is no intention to subject you to this process this evening but, be assured, the entire explanation did require elements of research.

We will now fast forward to the point that the Junior Deacon instructs him on advancing to the East. In Lodge Waikaremoana the instructions for advancing are given thus: -

Mr A____, the method of advancing to the East in this degree is by three irregular steps of approximately 9, 12 and 15 inches respectively. Standing perfectly erect with your heels together and your feet in the form of a square, stepping off with your left foot, you will now take a short pace of about 9 inches bringing your heels together as before. You will now take a further pace of about 12 inches, bringing your heels together as before. You will now take a final pace of about 15 inches, bringing your heels together as before.

Given the exactness of those instructions one assumes them to have a very important symbolic representation. Surprisingly my research found widely divergent opinions among Masonic scholars as to the "steps" significance. Fortunately, this is the only part of the explanation to be controversial and indecisive as to meaning, or else the entire elaboration would have been confusing and failed to obtain its objective.

The very simplest explanation is that the increasing length of the steps merely reflects the supposed increasing confidence of the candidate as he advances. Another more transparent view is that 9, 12 and 15 inches add up to 36 inches or one yard, which is the distance that the candidate should be from the VSL prior to beginning the advance. The most complex suggestion is that 9, 12 and 15 are multiples of 3, 4 and 5 which are the measurement of the three sides of a right-angled triangle, as in the theorem of Pythagoras, which also appears on the jewel of a Past Master.

However, others dismiss this as a mere coincidence. Interestingly, the measurements or multiples of 3, 4 and 5 are an accurate and commonly used method of checking for square when laying out foundations for a building. Of interest and surprise to me Brethren, was to discover that not all lodges state the length of the step, merely directing the candidate to take a short pace, a slightly longer pace and a still longer pace again. Also, that some lodges are not diligent, in observing the directions given by the Junior Deacon and the *heels together, feet in the form of a square* are sometimes confused with the first regular step.

Brethren the dissertation was terminated at this point and it was explained to the candidate that he was almost ready to undertake his Obligation, an explanation of which would be given on a future evening. He was also reminded that, on the evening of his initiation, he was, at this point, still *hood-winked* and therefore in a state of *darkness*. It was hoped, however, that the foregoing explanation had provided him some degree of enlightenment.

Brethren, thank you for your patience and attentiveness.