

## A Convenient Room Adjoining the Lodge

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Q. Where were you first prepared to be made a freemason?

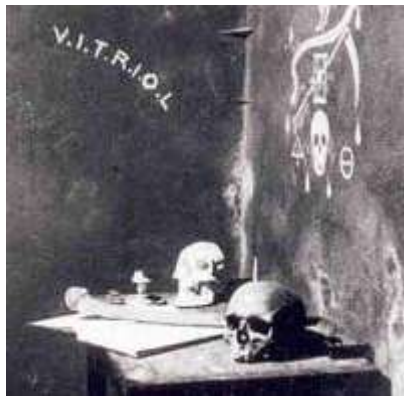
A. In my heart

Q. Where next?

A. In a convenient room adjoining the Lodge.

How often do we find in our own jurisdiction that the convenient room adjoining the lodge is just that? It can range from being nothing more than a utility cupboard, to a room that is used to store the banners and paraphernalia from other masonic orders. In some lodges the convenient room is at least a small room, whilst in other it can be no more than a section of partition or a curtain that is drawn across a corner of the entrance hall-way.

However this approach to what constitutes a convenient room is not unique to this jurisdiction alone for masonic author Bro Robert Lomas, in his book "Turning the Hiram Key", describes his experiences of the convenient room at his initiation as, "...On that chilly winter night my lack of proper clothing was bringing me out in goose bumps...In the distance muffled conversations were audible; the sounds of different voices creeping under the closed door were overlaid with the rattle of cutlery coming up the stairs. I was alone, pondering the wisdom of seeking Masonic Initiation [as]...I was standing in the ladies' toilet on the first floor of the Eaglecliffe Masonic Hall..."



Hopefully we do not have many lodges in our jurisdiction that have to resort the ladies toilet for their convenient room. But it raises the question regarding the import of the question, where next? And do we take the answer to that question seriously enough, or is it treated in a purely perfunctory manner with no due relevance or meaning attached?

As most TFTEM reader would be well aware, the concept of the convenient room in many European and American jurisdictions is taken quite seriously with said room being referred to as "A Chamber of Reflection". These rooms are meant to be used as a time of quiet reflection to consider why a brother has decided to join Freemasonry, and in some lodges this very question requires a written answer that is then read out to the Lodge before the ceremony takes place.

A Chamber of Reflection may also contain various items designed to stimulate reflection, such as an hour-glass, skull, or a lit candle, with the phrase "know thyself" or the acronym V.I.T.R.I.O.L. written on the wall. For these lodges the convenient room is designed to be more than just a place to dress the candidate, for it is not only meant to simulate reflection but also to create the right mental state for the initiation ceremony – to be properly prepared.

So do we sell our candidates short by offering them no more than a broom cupboard to mentally prepare themselves for the ceremony of initiation? Our ritual states that, "externally you were prepared in a peculiar manner in a convenient room adjoining the Lodge... Should that preparation at the Lodge prior to the ceremony of imitation be more meaningful? So should all future newly built or renovated Lodge Buildings include a real convenient room adjoining the lodge – i.e. a Chamber of Reflection?