

The Trinity College Manuscript (1711)

The Trinity MS. was found among the papers of a famous Irish doctor and scientist, Sir Thomas Molyneux (1661-1733).

Whereas the MS. has received attention because the first hint of a Third Degree, the significance of this MS. for Irish Freemasons is, of course, that it is dated 1711, it is about Masonic Ritual and it has an Irish providence.



Sir Thomas Molyneux (1661-1733)

We cannot say that the Trinity College Manuscript, or Trinity College, Dublin, Manuscript is a genuine Masonic document. We can only indicate two truths, first that it has long been held by the said College, secondly that it entered the library because it

was included in the literary collection of a doctor and scientist named Sir Thomas Molyneux (1661-1733).

There is every reason to believe, based on the text, that this document is of English origin, constituting in a certain way a summary of the Dumfries Manuscript previously presented.

The context - At the time the date February 1711 is inscribed on the manuscript, Ireland, which had been invaded, colonized and subdued under the “reign” of Cromwell (1649), was living through difficult days; while in 1707 there has just been performed on the neighboring island, the official union of England and Scotland.

The new Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, led by Queen Anne Stuart (1665-1714), is on track, despite its eight million inhabitants (against 25 million in France), to become the leading economic power of Europe.

For the record - According to tradition, the unexpected Masonic initiation, in about 1711, of the Honourable Elizabeth St. Leger, at the age of 16 or 17, took place at Doneraile Court. She is said to have been initiated after secretly observing the proceedings of a lodge held in the family home of the first Viscount and first Baron Doneraile Kimayden, her father.

The Original Text



Question. - Wt manner of man are you?

Answer. - I am a Mason.

Q. - How shall I know that?

A. - By ye signs, tokens, & points of my entry.

Q. - Where were you entered?

A. - In a full, & perfect lodge.

Q. - Wt makes a full, & perfect lodge?

A. - Three Masters (1), 3 fellow craftsmen, & 3 enterprentices.

Q. - How stands yr lodge?

A. - East, & west like ye temple of Jerusalem.

Q. - Where sits ye master (2)?

A. - In a Chair of bone in ye middle of a four square pavement.

Q. - Wt sits he there for?

A. - To observe the suns rising to see to set his men to work.

Q. - How high is yr lodge?

A. - As high as ye stars inches, & feet innumerable.

Q. - Where do you keep the key of ye lodge?

A. - In a box of bone within a foot, & 1/2 of ye lodge door.

Q. - How far is it from ye cable to ye anchor?

A. - As far as from ye tongue o ye heart.

Q. - Which way blows ye wind?

A. - East & west & out of ye south.

The common sign is with your right hand rub yr mouth then cross yr throat & lay it on ye left brea[st].

The Masters sign is back bone, the word matchpin.

The fellow craftsman's sign is knuckles, & sinues ye word Jachquin.

The Enterprentice's sign is sinues, the word Boaz or its hollow. Squeeze the Master by ye back bone, put your knee between his, & say Matchpin.

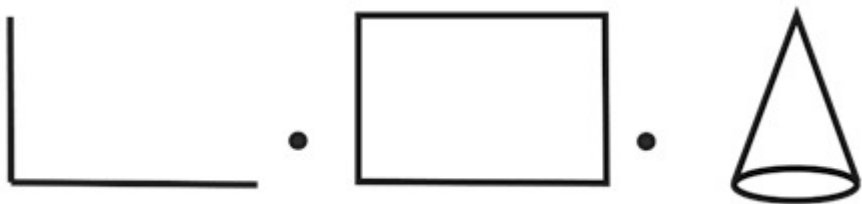
Squeeze the fellow craftsman in knuckles, & sinues & say Jachquin.

Squeeze the enterprentice in sinues, & say boaz, or its hollow (3).

To know in ye dark if there be a mason in Company, Say ye day was made for seeing, & ye night for hearing.

If you are amongst the fraternity, & they drink to you, turn ye top of the glass down and if after two or three times so doing, they say drink & i'll warrant you, then they will pay your clubb.

Or if you say ye squire is lean, or throw a tobacco stopper to one of them & say change me yt groat (3), & they will pay your club. To send for a brother the signs are these



If you say ye lodge is untiled, that is as much as to say there is some one in ye Company you suspect for a brother.

To bring a man from a scaffold, or any other place, hold yr heels together, and yr toes open, & look up, then with yr hand, or Cane make a right angle.

This as all other Motions must be done very carelessly.

[Endorsement]: Free Masonry Feb: 1711

NOTES

1. - Under no less a penalty - Formula contained in the Masonic oath of Anglo-American Lodges. The applicant commits himself to preserve the secrecy that is imposed to him, under a symbolic penalty...

The preceding drawing consists of a cross resting on the letter “H,” in which we can identify the initials of the phrase Templum

Hierosolyma meaning: The Temple of Jerusalem, or possibly an interpretation of the Christogram “I.H.S.”. The roughly drawn sketch is reminiscent of a Triple Tau symbol from the Royal Arch degree.

2. - Three Masters, three Fellowcrafts, and three Apprentices. We find here the three degrees of Modern Craft Masonry.

3. - The word Master here refers to the Master of a Lodge, not to a Master Mason.

4. - Hollow - The columns Boaz and Jachin of Solomon's temple were hollow (Jeremiah 52:21). This may also refer to the Scottish word Boss, meaning Hollow.

5. - Former English currency whose value was four pence.