R.A.M.
FRIENDSHIP MEETING



RAM FRIENDSHIP MEETING

GROUNDWORK:
The presentation can be given in two formats:

a) Where a RAM and Mark Lodge meet on the same evening by giving the presentation, with the permission of the Worshipful Master, in the Mark Lodge

or preferably

b) As in RAM Lodges which meet on nights other than the Mark Lodge to which it is 'moored' by inviting Mark Master Masons to attend their meeting utilising the same principles as adopted for Mark Friendship evening i.e. by personal invitation.
Whilst an approach to the Secretary of a Mark Lodge may assist in stimulating attendance, particularly if he circulates an electronic invitation to his members, there is no substitute to members of a RAM Lodge inviting at least one Mark Master Mason not in the RAM to attend as his guest; personal invitations enjoy a far better response than open invitations.

FORMAT: in a MARK Lodge is a straight forward presentation of the paper together with a Q & A session

FORMAT: In a RAM Lodge
Ensure there is a member of the Lodge prepared with the talk and has a good knowledge of the degree and is able to answer questions that may be put forward

Ensure a Brother is available to greet the Mark Master Masons on arrival and remain with them in a room near to the Lodge Room whilst the Lodge carries out the usual business; during this time he can hand them the Leaflet and possibly an introductory letter from your Lodge.

Transact the normal business of the Lodge
Close the Lodge
The Officers and Brethren remain in their respective places in the Lodge
The Mark Master Masons enter the Lodge, via the Point of Announcement, clothed in their Mark Regalia and are escorted to seats in the Triangle among the Brethren of the Lodge.
Worshipful Commander welcomes his guests into the Lodge and explains the objectives of the evening.
The Brother giving the presentation should do so from the Point of Announcement pointing out the various items of Regalia and position of the Officers has he does so.
At the conclusion of the talk invite questions from the floor.
Retire in an orderly manner with the Worshipful Commander leading.

FESTIVE BOARD: - Mark Lodge Toasts as per Toast List
RAM Lodges Toasts as listed below - No Salutes

The Queen
Grand Master
Pro Grand Master etc
Provincial Grand Master
Worshipful Commander
Warders Toast

RAM Friendship Meeting

The purpose of our meeting this evening is to introduce our Brother Mark Master Masons to one of the most interesting and beautiful degrees in masonry. It is particularly apposite to Mark Masons as they, having taken their fourth regular step in masonry, are uniquely qualified to become members of this ancient and honourable fraternity. Can I thank you for joining us in this the …… Lodge of RAM No ……. I hope you will find our presentation interesting, enlightening and stimulating.

Let me begin brethren with a short explanation of the regalia of a Royal Ark Mariner. One of the delights of the degree is that the regalia is very simple; an uncluttered apron and a jewel with the addition of a collar for Officers and Past Commanders. The jewel with its distinctive rainbow ribbon is an emblematical rainbow with the dove bearing an olive branch underneath, a symbol of peace and hope. This symbol is of course well known among speculative masons as it adorns our Deacons Badges, Jewels, and Wands in the Craft and elsewhere. The edge of the apron and the flap are edged in a ribbon of the colours of the rainbow; the flap on the apron is curved following the semblance of a rainbow as did the early Craft aprons. The only change to the apron is silver-coloured triangles replacing the three rosettes when one assumes the chair; these become gilt if one receives Grand Rank.

Holders of Provincial and Grand Rank wear a small neck collarette, whilst Past Commanders can wear an additional breast jewel if they wish. The PGM's regalia is identical to that of any other past Commander with the exception of the Collar Jewel. The regalia is uncomplicated as is the structure of rank and title.

I am not giving any secrets away if I inform you that part of the ritual of the presentation of a R. A. M. Grand Lodge Certificate is "I congratulate you on becoming a member of this beautiful and interesting degree: may you live long to transmit the lessons it teaches".

A beautiful and interesting degree it certainly is; the ceremony is quite short but packed with meaning and symbolism. Our candidate enters the Lodge room 'clothed in the habiliments of a distressed mason', but as he passes through his 'elevation' he completes the ceremony in a very different state. It is a Ceremony which truly fulfils the criterion of an Initiatory Rite and develops the essence of such a rite; the making of a new beginning or adoption of a new outlook on life.

The degree above all celebrates the providence and mercy of God in saving Noah and his family from the destruction meted out to all others. The actions of Noah and the symbol of the Ark are particularly apposite. The Master, referred to as the Commander and representing Noah, speaks of his Wardens as his Sons, Japheth and Shem.

The ritual focuses on those attributes and virtues exemplified by Noah, and the symbolic uses of the working tools of the degree, are beautifully and informatively explained. The elucidation of the steps taken to move from the West to the East is particularly important in this degree, as are the addresses by the three principal officers to the candidate after he has been entrusted with the traditional secrets.

Our candidate is clearly and, particular in this Fraternity, kindly instructed in his obligations to others and to his God. Above all there is a different feel about this degree than many others. This is difficult to explain. The degree is not homily; the symbolism in Ark Masonry is anything but basic. But, there is a very real closeness between our members and the candidate; indeed the installation of the commander ritualistically stresses this very real bond and the Address to the new commander by the outgoing commander is particularly apt in this regard. Indeed, since the ritual was reissued in 1994, the commander speaks of Ark Masonry as a Fraternity of Royal Ark Mariners, rather than merely as a degree.

In fact, the ceremony is now only described as a degree four times in the ritual, reflecting perhaps that our candidates receive more than just another degree. He is welcomed in to a very real Fellowship. That impression, in addition to our fraternal message, is one of the core aspects of Royal Ark Mariner masonry.

Like both Craft and Mark, implicit within the Royal Ark Mariner ritual is that great Masonic allegory of Building. However, in this degree, the issue is not how to build something, but rather the ceremony celebrates a man who did so; in this case the Patriarch Noah in his construction of the Ark which the ritual describes as an 'Ark of Safety'. Furthermore, it teaches the futility of relying on any human endeavour or expedient to escape divine justice without the direct instructions of the Almighty. Obedience to the Deity is not to be avoided, but to be embraced.

Where does the Noachite legend fit within Masonry?

There is no doubt that the story of Noah and the Great Flood has been performed and dramatically interpreted over hundreds of years in the various Mystery Plays of the medieval Christian church.

These biblical dramas would have been very familiar to the ancient operative Masons; they were popular until suppressed in the 16th century as part of the Reformation. The Mysteries enacted the events of the Bible from the fall of Lucifer to the Day of Judgement in a series of pageants ranging in number from about 25 to nearly 50.

Each pageant or section of the story was performed by a different trade-guild, often with a humorous or macabre connection between the trade concerned and the playlet. Thus, in many places carpenters enacted the crucifixion, the butchers that of Abraham and Isaac and the carpenters staged the tale of Noah and the Flood. By the 15th century the plays had been written down in various forms and the Mystery Cycles that survive today, such as those of Chester or Wakefield, are long and very elaborate. In Chester it was originally performed by the 'Wattermen of the Dee'.

Noah and his Ark are always present; masons today who go to see a Mystery Play will be particularly amused by the antics of Mrs Noah, the hectoring wife of Noah, who is initially very sceptical of her husband's ark-building obsession.

These Mystery Plays probably had no direct bearing on the origin of the Masonic Noachite ritual. However, we know that the Masons' guilds were regularly involved in the staging of these plays.

But it is necessary to appreciate the importance of the Noah legend in English tradition, and we should not be surprised that it was referred to early in the history of English Freemasonry. It seems that Noah had for many years been considered as one of the Grand Masters of Freemasonry, something which many modern Masons seem to have forgotten. R.W.Bro. John Mandleberg, a Cheshire mason and a member of Quatuor Coronati Lodge of Masonic research observes that "as Royal Ark Mariners we are the custodians of a very ancient speculative tradition."

We need to consider the family of Noah rather carefully at this point, There are two genealogies of Noah, one in Genesis Chapter 4 and one in Chapter 5; it is the latter that the rituals of the degree select.

Thus Noah is descended from Adam, being nine generations in descent from him. His half-brother was Tubalcain, who will be well known to all Masons for his skills with metal-working. Noah was no mean craftsman either, which must be a contributory factor in his being chosen as a Masonic figure: the skill in building the Ark would have been considerable.

Indeed, some have seen the dedication and skill of Noah as a builder, with the enormous nature of the task and the importance of what he constructed on God's direct orders, as comparable or a least identifiable with that current Masonic centrepiece, the building of King Solomon's Temple.

It is no surprise to find, therefore, that this view was one shared by early Masons: Noah may well have been the early prototype or precursor of Hiram Abif.

One of the earliest surviving Masonic documents, the Graham Manuscript, written about 1726, explicitly refers to the sons of Noah seeking the secret which their dead father had possessed in a manner similar to part of the Traditional History of the Third Degree. This manuscript thus gives a Noah story, rather than an Hiramic one as the legend of the Third Degree.

Whilst there is reference to Hiram and his work for King Solomon, it makes no mention of his death. It was not until 1730 that any detailed account was published of the death of Hiram Abif, as we would recognise it, this being in Prichard's Masonry Dissected.

This has profound implications for Ark Mariners, especially when one considers the central nature of what became the Third Degree of the Craft. It would seem possible, then, that at some point various Masons decided to replace Noah with Hiram, and that this change took place over time.

One has only to look at Anderson's 1738 Constitutions to realise the key importance of Noah for early Freemasons. In addition, while all Master Masons may see themselves as 'Sons of the Widow', so are they too, by ancient Masonic tradition, all Noachites or sons of Noah.

Anderson describes himself in 1738 "as a true Noachida." In surviving the Flood and being the father of the new human race, for no-one other than Noah and his family had survived, Noah can be seen to represent a second Adam and this makes him of enormous importance, notwithstanding his great skill in construction. For, as we are told, Noah was "a just man, perfect in his generations and (who) walked with God."

There was a shift from Noah's central importance in Masonry to his virtual disappearance, except really in the Royal Ark Mariner, now considered strictly outside the three degrees of 'pure Antient Masonry' according to the United Grand Lodge in its 1813 Article of Union.

Recently a tracing board has been revived with an official lecture published in 1995 under the authority of the Grand Master's Royal Ark Council. This lecture is an adaptation of one researched and delivered in the 1950s by two Hertfordshire Royal Ark Mariners.

The Tracing Board is similar in look and style to a warrant dated 1796 issued to a certain Charles Sinclair by a body referred to as the 'Grand Lodge of Ark Mariners.'
Experts suggest that the Board was painted about that time.

Being a board from the time of the Antients, it contains many more elements than one would expect from a purely Royal Ark Mariner tracing board based on today's official ritual. Not least of importance is the reference to the two pillars of Enoch, the great-grandfather of Noah, one made of brick, one made of marble, both for the purpose of containing and protecting the Archives of Wisdom. As Neville Barker Cryer so perceptively observes in his book, The Arch and the Rainbow, the Tracing Board so recently re-introduced "reminds any Ark Mariner of the older setting within which this degree existed from its inception. It...links the past with the present (and also) tradition with current practice."

The precise origins of the Royal Ark Mariner are unknown. The earliest confirmed record of such a degree being specifically worked is 1790 in Bath, although the existence of Noachite traditions within the body of English Freemasonry is suggested as early as 1726.

The claims that a Grand Lodge of Ark Mariners was formed in 1772, and presided over by the Duke of Clarence, are not convincing. So the later claims that this Grand Lodge had fallen into disuse to be 'revived' in 1871, with reference to statutes of 1870, do not really stand up.

Whilst the degree seems to have been practised in a variety of ways in a host of different Lodges, there was probably no Grand Lodge over the degree. However, the degree had almost disappeared when it was 'revived' in this supposed Grand Lodge of Ark Mariners under Morton Edwards in 1871. As some Mark Lodges had also begun to work the degree, there was some conflict with the Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons (formed in 1856).

This occurred when Canon Rev G R Portal, Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons, announced (also in 1870) that, as the degree of Ark Mariner had been worked in Mark lodges since 1790, then the Mark would protect the Royal Ark Mariner degree under a new Grand Master's Royal Ark Council.

Hence the reason for Mark Grand Lodge's current control of the Ark Mariner. However, this conflict and dissension continued post-1870, until the Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons simply bought the degree from Edwards in 1884 for the princely sum of £25.

The Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons of England and Wales is automatically Grand Master of the Ancient and Honourable Fraternity of Royal Ark Mariners, and the degree of Royal Ark Mariner is conferred only upon Mark Master Masons.

This inextricably links the governance of these two quite ritualistically separate degrees. Lodges of Royal Ark Mariners are 'moored' to Mark Lodges. They must have the same number as the Mark Lodge, irrespective of the age or seniority of the Lodge of Royal Ark Mariners, and they may also have the same name.

This Lodge, the ……. Lodge of Royal Ark Mariners No ……. has a warrant dated ……. and is moored to the ……. Lodge of MMM No ……..

ADD relevant LODGE information

There are twenty four Royal Ark Mariner Lodges in the Province of Cheshire; there are forty three Mark Lodges. Of the circa 1100 mark masons in the Province some 47% are already Royal Ark Mariners.

I hope that you have found this presentation interesting and that it has whet your appetite for an advancement in your Masonic knowledge. Please consider joining this beautiful and interesting degree in Freemasonry. You will find a warm welcome in this Lodge and you will not be disappointed.

With acknowledgements to W.Bro. Raymond Guthrie, RAMGR -2011