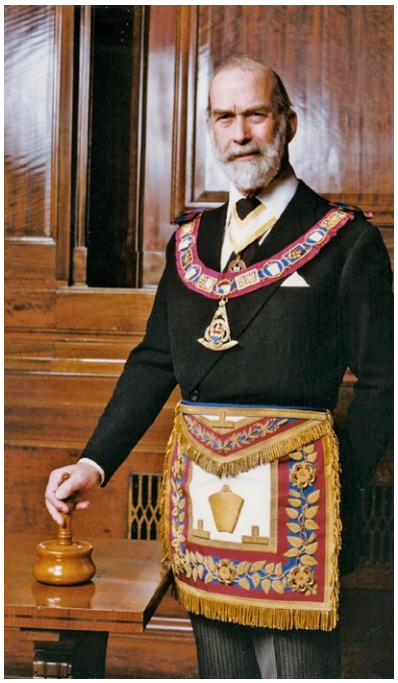

Mark Masonry: Clockwise, from far left, The Grand Master, HRH Prince Michael of Kent, GCVO; the apron of Past Grand Master HRH The Prince of Wales, later King Edward VII; Pro Grand Master Raymond John Smith; the Mark Master Masons coat of arms; The Mark Benevolent Fund coat of arms; the Mark Master Masons grant of arms

Factfile

The Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons of England and Wales and its Districts and Lodges Overseas

With its own terminology, structures and practices, each Order is different from the next. Here, we break down the origins, requirements and organisation of Mark Masonry

Our Grand Masters

The Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons of England and Wales and its Districts and Lodges Overseas is governed by The Grand Master, Most Worshipful Brother HRH Prince Michael of Kent, GCVO. He has held this office since 1982 and is the fourth royal Grand Master of the Order, a list that includes HRH The Prince of Wales, who was Grand Master from 1886 until being crowned King Edward VII in 1901. As is customary when a royal is at the helm of a masonic Order, Prince Michael has a Pro Grand Master to oversee the day-to-day administration of the Order and to represent him at many ceremonial engagements. This responsibility lies with Most Worshipful Brother Raymond John Smith.

The fourth regular step

The Book of Constitutions still contains the 1813 declaration that '.... pure Antient masonry consists of three degrees and no more, viz. those of the Entered Apprentice, the Fellow Craft, and the Master Mason including the Supreme Order of the Holy Royal Arch'. But it is actually during the Mark Degree that a candidate takes his fourth regular step in Freemasonry. This solemn part of the ceremony reminds candidates that by being advanced into the Mark they are taking an important step into the Progressive Orders of Freemasonry.

Who can join?

Any Craft Master Mason from a Craft Constitution recognised by UGLE can apply to become a member of a Mark lodge in the English Constitution.

A core of benevolence

The Mark Benevolent Fund was created in 1868 on the suggestion of the Reverend George Raymond Portal, then Grand Master. He felt that, for charity to be effective, it had to be disbursed swiftly and without the bureaucracy of other masonic charities. His motto, 'Bis dat qui cito dat' – 'he gives twice who gives promptly' – became, and still is, the guiding principal of The Mark Benevolent Fund.

The coat of arms

The coat of arms features a shield bearing a section of an arch, with a keystone engraved with an equilateral triangle. It is supported by a craftsman holding a keystone and a warden holding an axe. The Order's motto, 'Lapis reprobatus caput anguli', translates as 'the stone which was rejected has become the headstone of the corner'.

A long history

Before conferring the Mark Degrees 250 years ago, Thomas Dunckerley must have received the degrees. It is said that a form of Mark Degree was in existence in Scotland as early as 1599. Little has been written about the history of the Mark, though the inception of the Grand Lodge is regarded as being a result of the political and social unrest brought about by the Crimean War and, had it not been for an 11th-hour change of heart by the Rulers of the Craft, the Mark Degree may well have been included in that 1813 declaration regarding Pure Antient Masonry.

Marking Well, a collection of essays on the Mark Degree, edited by Andrew Prescott, was published to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons.

Visit **www.markmasonshall.org** for more information about the Order.