

*The Convivial Freemason Working Tools
of the Fork & Knife Degree*

Forward

Sadly, like so many of ancient traditions have disappeared from our Freemasonry workings of those modern times. More of these ancient traditions are disappearing or dropped for whatever reason from our rituals' and traditions past down from our ancient ancestors of Freemason's, sadly when these ancient traditions as disappeared they have gone for ever.

This article is to present to you just one of many those ancient traditions, which is totally disappeared within the Irish Constitution, although still preformed in a few freemason lodges in other masonic constitutions. Therefore, it is hoped, by reading this short article recalling one of Freemasonry ancient customs and traditions of our Order, hopefully will result in greater interest and research amongst those reading this article, and be successful in that assisting fellow brethren in seeking further light of their masonic journey and career.

In the light of criticism generally directed towards Freemasonry, it is important, in my personal view that its members should be well informed with regards to various aspects of the Masonic Order and its ancient historical history.

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The Working Tools

The convivial Freemason, or the Fork & Knife Degree, generally used, by nature of the name “Fork & Knife” implies, performed at Installation Dinners and festive boards.

The working tools of the Convivial Freemason or Fork & Knife Degree are: -

- a) The Fork
- b) The Knife, and
- c) The Tumbler

It was always the tradition of any lodge that the Immediate Past Master presented the working tools to the Newly Installed Master at the installation dinner or at the Festive Board following their installation, traditionally it was presented in this method enabling the Newly Installed Master to receive the wording and explanation of the working tools to learn in sufficient time before his term of office ended.

Immediate Past Master – Worshipful Master, I now present to you the working tools of the Convivial Freemason or Fork & Knife Degree;

The Fork is an implement that enables even the most inexperienced Freemason to secure, at times by reaching across the table, the delicate and succulent morsels that adorn our Festive Board to delight the eye and stimulate the jaded appetite. This implement is used to convey these morsels to that aperture which has been specifically designed to receive them, and which reduces all nutriment to a common level.

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The Fork should always use when partaking of Peas, which, if conveyed to the mouth with the assistance of the knife, often prove very elusive.

The Knife, when properly ground and sharpened, is used to reduce all crude matter to a regular form, and assists us to dissect the anatomy of even the most venerable Rooster. The Knife teaches us to cut off no more than we can chew, and to limit our desires in every station of life, so that rising to eminence by merit we may live respected, and die regretted.

The Tumbler, enables us to ascertain and determine, with accuracy and precision, the quantity of liquor we find conducive to the preservation of genial joviality. As all Tumblers have not that mark upon them, commonly known as the Pretty, the skilful Craftsman will measure his tot with the aid of the two or three finger rule; the Tumbler will only hold a certain amount of liquor without detriment to its surroundings, and it teaches us that we should ascertain, and never exceed, the limits of our own internal economy.

As we met on this special occasion as Speculative, as well as Energetic and Operative, Convivial Freemasons, we also apply these tools to our morals.

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Teaching of the Working Tools - the *FORK* teaches us that we should not always sit down and await what we desire in life, but reach out, secure, and retain it, profiting by our opportunities and assimilating the knowledge gained through our experiences.

Nor should we forget that the little things in life should be looked after, lest they elude our grasp and lost beyond recall.

As the prongs of the *FORK* are all equal and mutually assist one another, being joined together in one compact structure, so we as Freemasons should stand together and practise those four qualifications that cannot be too strongly recommended to your notice:

- Straightforwardness in our dealings with one another.
- Sympathy for the failings of a Brother.
- Good Temper in our differences and opinions.
- And Fidelity to the sacred Tie that binds us together.

The *KNIFE* teaches us the value of assiduity, and the patience to cope with the many problems that confront us, so we are taught to take care of our mental and corporeal faculties.

The *Tumbler* teaches us the importance of moderation and temperance. As it has no graduated scale by which to measure its varying contents, the user must exercise his judgement as to the quantity of liquor he pours therein.

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As the *TUMBLER* will only hold a limited quantity without detriment to its surroundings so we should estimate our capacity so as not to confuse our mental and physical equilibrium. As the perfect *TUMBLER* always rings true, be it empty or full, so the perfect Convivial Freemason should always ring true after labour at the Installation Dinner or Festive Board. A cracked Tumbler is despised and rejected by all.

Thus the Working Tools of a Convivial Freemason teach us to bear in mind and practise the cardinal virtues of Temperance and Prudence, so that when we are summonsed to rise and drink the Toast, having partaken of the good things provided by a bounteous Providence for our enjoyment, we may depart homeward with the gratifying testimony of a contented mind, a clear brain, and equal poise.”

-End-

***Side Note** – some masonic constitutions who may still preformed the Convivial Freemason Working Tools, may use a set of different wording, the same principles applied as shown in this article*

W Bro Ian MacIntyre