

I read with interest and agreement Bob Moore's very perceptive article which highlighted the fact that many of us have for many years been delivering a ritual which we may not fully understand.

One of my happiest moments in my thirty-odd years in masonry was back in East Kent (I moved to Somerset nearly three years ago) when one of our newly raised Brethren was given his ritual book. This really nice, kind, good man was not, in his own words, 'the sharpest tool in the shed', and he really wanted to understand the ritual. Every week, when I saw him, he would come up to me with his ritual book, in which a number of lines had been ruled under with pencil by him, and ask me to explain what they meant. As such, he understood them, and when he got to the Chair several years later, he turned out to be a pretty competent ritualist. So, I've at least done *one* thing right in my masonic life!

We were aware of this potential issue within Quantock Lodge and have taken steps to remedy the situation. To put it simply, we have practice sessions for the Brethren, but once a month we have a Lodge of Instruction in the truest sense of those words: the L of I is NOT run by the Past Masters; it is run by the Brethren who have not yet reached the Chair. We invite questions and answer them to the best of our ability; for example, at our last L of I, the Brethren asked about the origins of 'Masonic Fire'. If we understand what we are talking about in our delightful but sometimes archaic ritual, we have a better knowledge of that ritual and, as such, better delivery of the ritual. The L of I is also open to Brethren who wish to 'have a go' at a certain piece of ritual, which is very popular. For example, one of our Master Masons told me he'd like to 'have a go' at the Second Degree tracing board at some time in the near future. Fantastic!

So, yes; our ritual is important and must be treasured, but to treasure it we must understand it. Thus, taking the time to help our newer Brethren, we strengthen their understanding, their confidence, and their love of the Craft. As a by-product, we also improve our retention – two birds with one stone!

It is a harsh reality which those of us at Provincial rank and above must understand that we are the past; the newer Brethren are the future of masonry. Our role is to advise and encourage and I do believe that there is a benevolent concern shown by the vast majority of we 'has-beens' to support our younger Brethren.

So, let's make sure that our Brethren fully understand the ritual which we are encouraging them to learn. They will then enjoy their masonry much more, and hey presto! – we have a bright and sunny future for our Province and our whole masonic institution.

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Quantock Lodge