

Richard Gan & Prof Aubrey Newman (editors), *Finding the Mark: The Collected Grand Stewards' Lectures*, Lewis Masonic, 2019. Hardback. ISBN , 400 pages, 25 illustrations, £25.

Reviewed by Bro Paul Calderwood

The study of the Mark Degree has received little detailed attention from Masonic historians. The number of books and studies which address this significant aspect of Freemasonry is small when compared to the number of publications about the Craft and it has long been a cause of regret for the serious student of what is an important subject.

However, there is some cheer to be derived from the fact that this is changing. An important impetus to the process was provided by the publication in 2006 of the book *Marking Well* (edited by Professor Andrew Prescott). Since then we have witnessed a welcome increase in that slim section of Masonic studies which focuses on Mark Masonry.

In promoting the study of this subject, several Mark Lodges have taken a lead - and at their head has been the Mark Grand Stewards Lodge which since 2002 has hosted an annual lecture that focuses on research in this specific field.

This concept was approved by the Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons in 2001 and since then this lectureship has developed a high reputation and it has been compared to the Prestonian Lectures of the Craft and the Batham Lectures of the Royal Arch. This is partly because the honour of addressing the lodge in this way has been restricted to the most distinguished researchers and speakers on the subject and all the lectures have been based upon original research, that has not been presented or published previously.

Up until now, these lectures have been privately printed and sent to members of the lodge only but – with the approval of the lecturers and the Committee of the Mark Grand Stewards Lodge – they have now been brought together by editors Richard Gan and Aubrey Newman and published by Lewis Masonic in 219.

The fourteen lectures cover a wide range of subjects, reflecting three principal themes, namely the study of a number of individuals who have been among the leading lights of Mark Masonry, the work of the administration of the order and the underlying meanings and symbolism of the Degree.

Subjects covered include *MW Bro the Revd Canon GR Portal, MA: from rebel to ruler; The Invention of a Mark Province, 1858-1894; Spirituality in Mark Masonry; A Presidents Life; The confluence of the Craft and the Mark; The Mark Grand Stewards and their Lodge; The Narratives of Early Mark Rituals; The Pictorial Heritage of the Golden Age of Mark Masonry; John Francis Dorrington, Grand Commander; The Rt Hon William Wither Bramston Beach, M.P., Grand Master 1866-69; Thomas Meggy: A charitable life captured in print; The Coming of Age of English Mark Masonry; R. M. Handfield-Jones: the Man, the Medic and the Mason.*

The impressive list of researchers who have delivered these lectures includes Dr James Daniel, the Revd Dr Michael Morgan, Dr Rointon Khambatta, Dr John Wade and John Acaster as well as the two eminent scholars who have been responsible for editing this excellent and informative publication.

In their Preface, the editors modestly expressed the hope that this book might make an admirable companion to the book edited by Andrew Prescott which is mentioned above – and there is no doubt that this will prove to be so.

It is a valuable and scholarly addition to a subject that merits far greater attention and its title *Finding the Mark* is very suitably chosen.