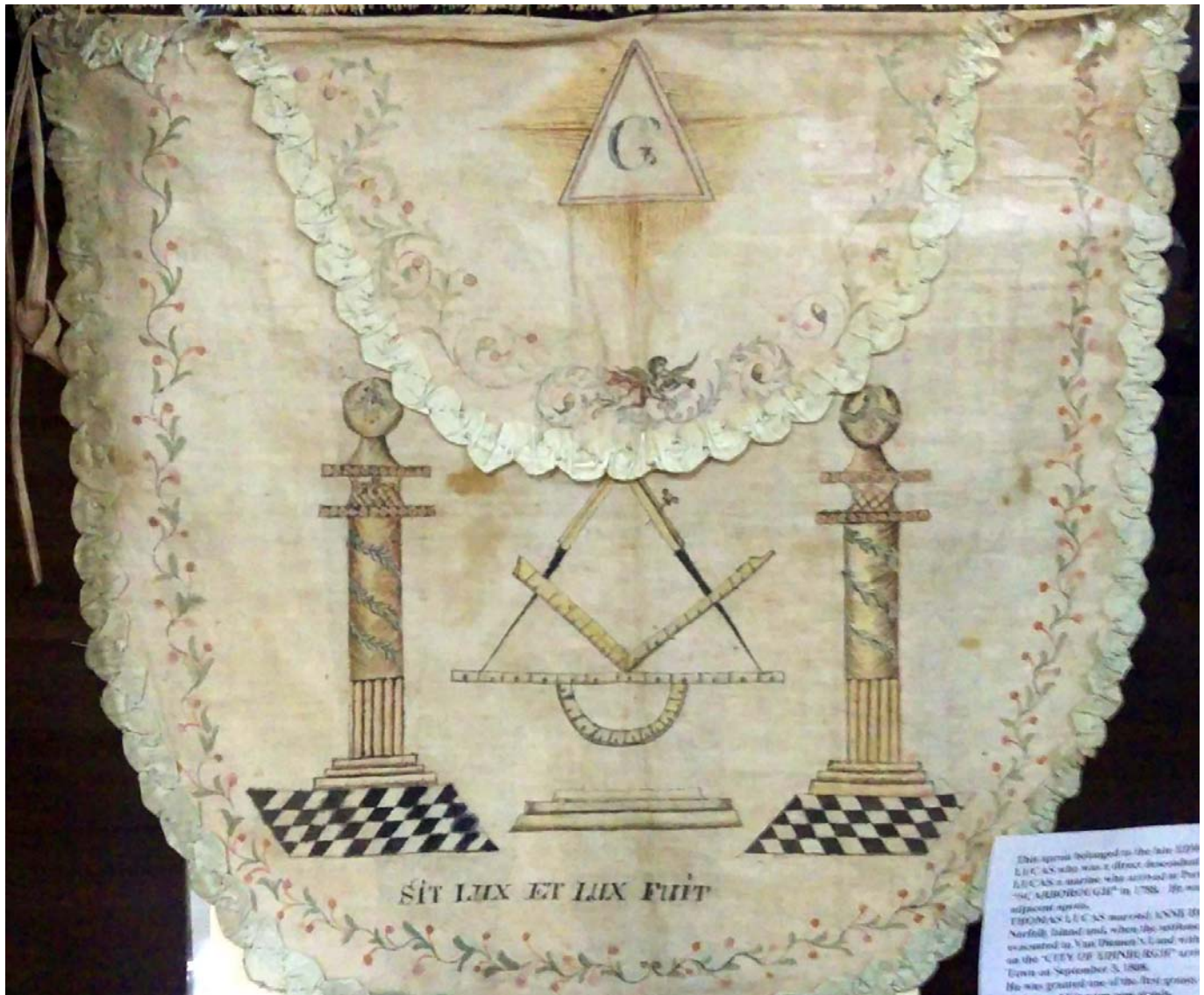


The Lucas Apron

© 2016 Neil Wynes Morse

The Grand Lodge of Tasmania Library and Museum has numerous treasures. One of these is a very old Masonic apron whose origins would seem to date back to before the First Fleet.



The Lucas Apron

Through the kindness of Bro Rob Clarke, the Grand Librarian and a PGM of the jurisdiction, I was able to view what may be the oldest Masonic relic in Australia.

The label displayed with the apron gives the following information:

This apron belonged to the late Edward George Lucas who was a direct descendant of Thomas Lucas a marine who arrived at Port Jackson on the *Scarborough* in 1788. He was the owner of the adjacent apron.

Thomas Lucas married Anne Howard, went to Norfolk Island and, when the settlement was closed, was evacuated to Van Diemen's Land with his four children on the *City of Edinburgh*, arriving in Hobart Town on September 3, 1808.

He was granted one of the first grants of land on which the town of Kingston now stands.

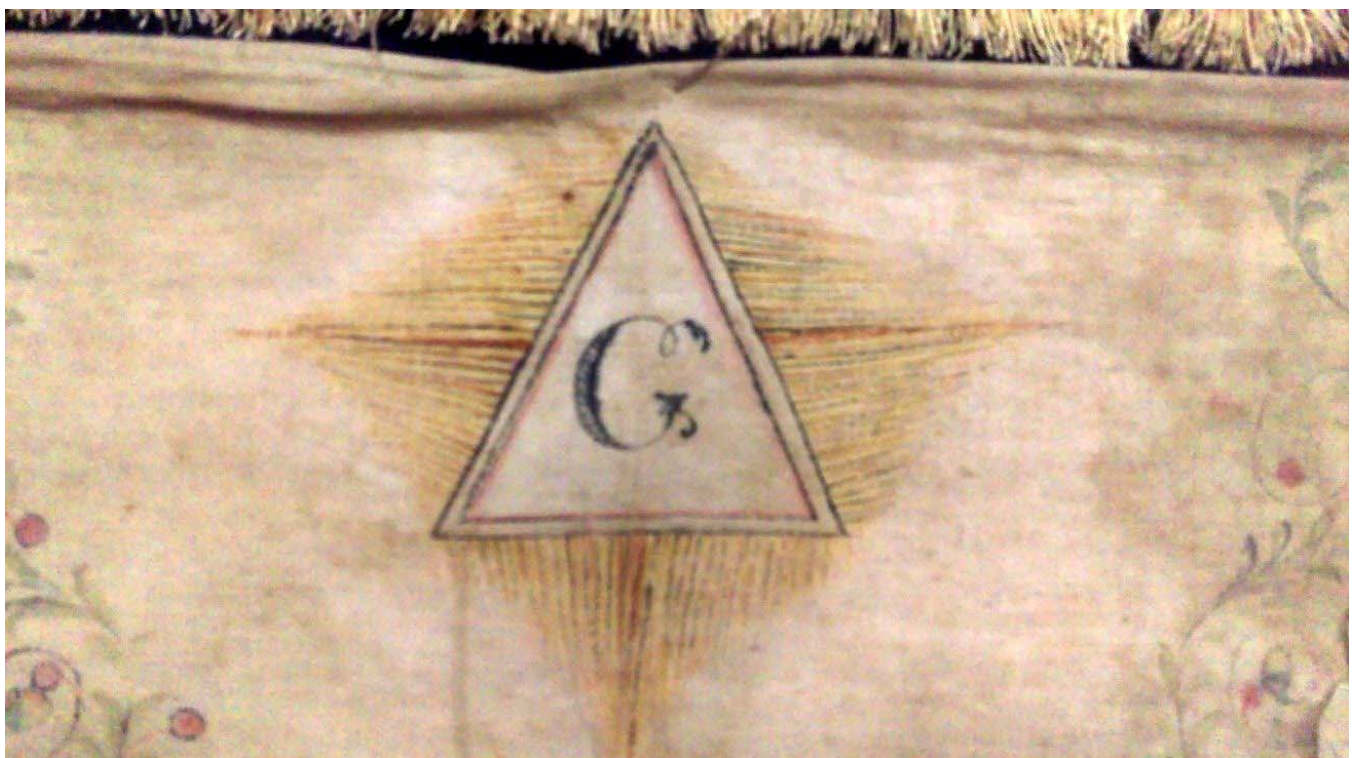
The apron is of fabric, rather than skin, and is hand sewn and hand painted. The fall is semi-circular, in the Scottish/European manner, but smaller in size than the current Scottish pattern; more akin to a pre-Revolution French apron.



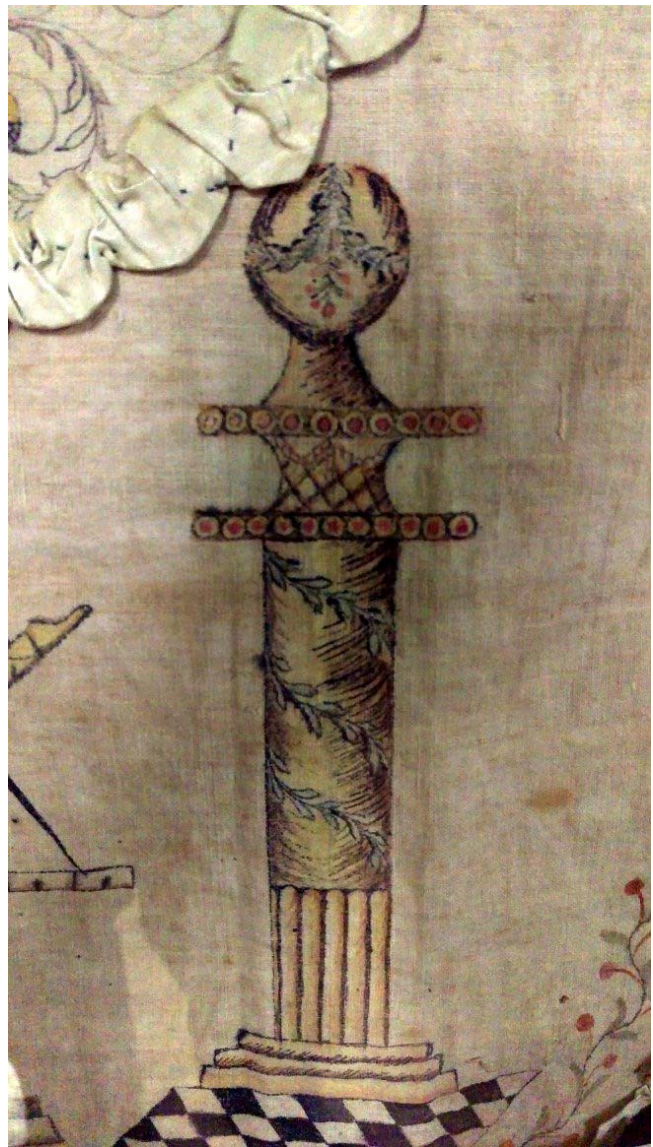
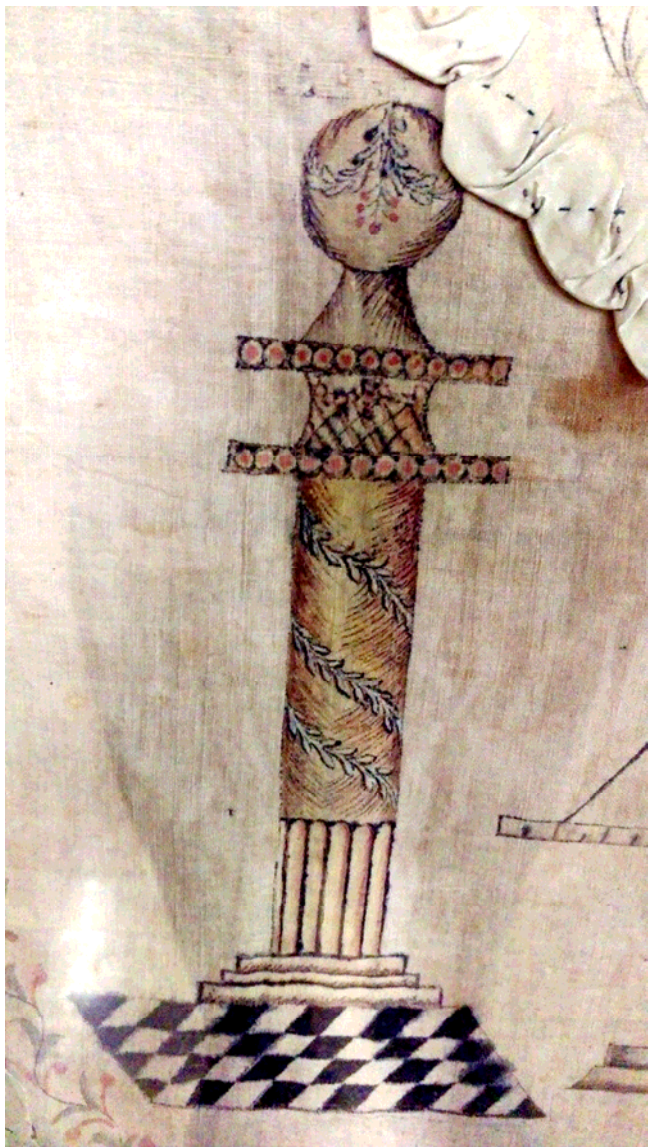
The angel with trumpet on the fall, showing the workmanship in the decoration and sewing

Advice received from the United Grand Lodge of England states:

Prior to 1813 there was no standard form for a masonic apron although some common patterns did emerge. "Sit Lux et Lux Fuit" is a generic motto meaning "let there be light and there was light" but the angel with the trumpet that is on the bottom of the flap is a feature of membership certificates for lodges affiliated to the Ancient Grand Lodge [the rival to the first Grand Lodge established in 1717, such that the merger between the two in 1813 created what is now the United Grand Lodge of England]. It would be consistent with the Lodge of Temperance which was so affiliated. However it may have been that this type of apron pattern was used by a number of Ancient Lodges so we can't link it solely to the Lodge of Temperance. The construction is also perfectly in period.



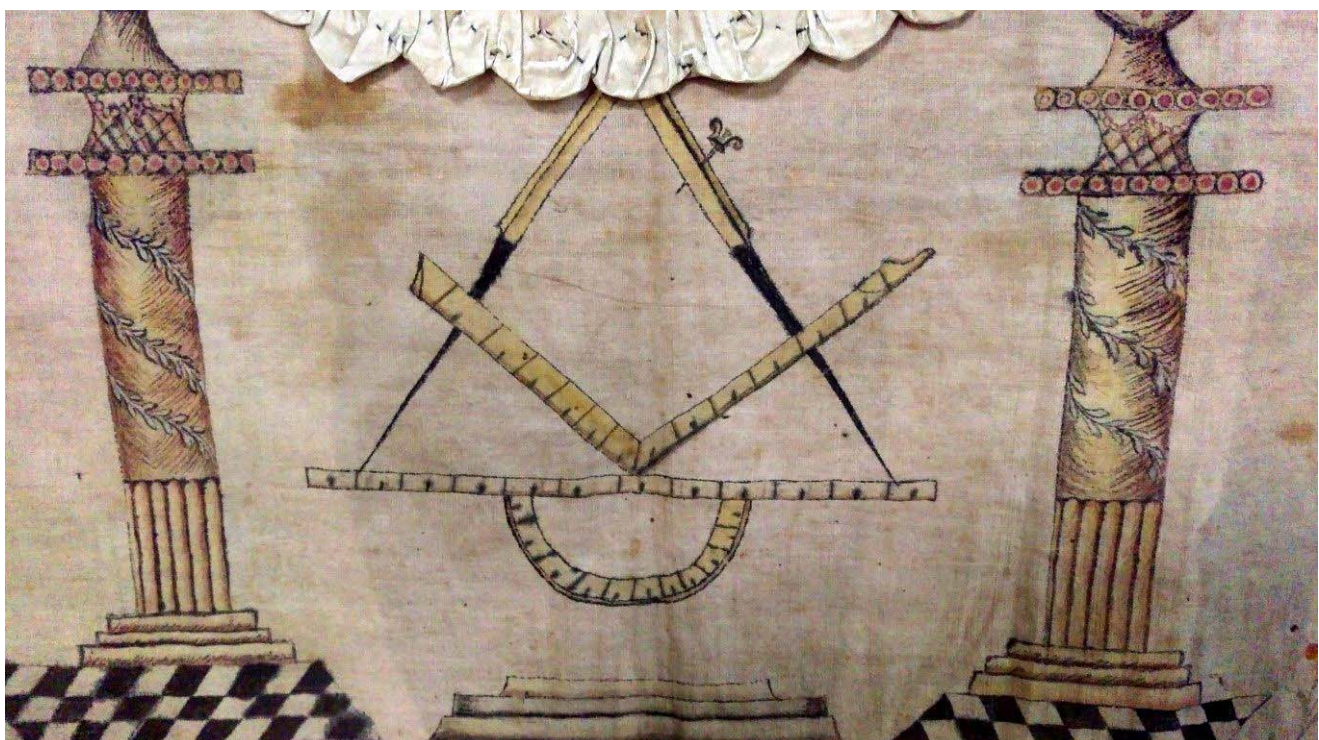
Detail of the irradiated triangle on the fall or flap



(above) Detail of the two columns on the main body of the apron

(below) Details of the square, compasses, rule and protractor on the main body of the apron.

[Note: it is uncommon to have inch markings on the square, and even more uncommon to have a rule and protractor as part of the overall design. The depiction of a wing set (adjustment) screw on the compasses is also unusual in a masonic context.]



Thomas Lucas, a Past Master of the Lodge, was an original 'First Fleeter'. He arrived in Port Jackson as a marine in the vessel *Scarborough* and in the *Historical Records of Australia* is recorded as a private in the 102nd Regiment in Captain Shea's Company of the New South Wales Corps between 1 July and 30 September 1788. By 1797 he had left the Corps and was, in August of that year, given a grant of 60 acres of land on Norfolk Island by Governor Hunter. A February 1805 list of 'People On and Off the Stores' on Norfolk Island states that he was at that time a painter and glazier. He left Norfolk Island on 3 September 1808 as part of the evacuation exercise on board the ship *City of Edinburgh* and with his family, comprising his wife Ann (nee Howard) and four sons, re-settled on the Derwent in Van Diemen's Land. Subsequently he received a holding in Queenborough/Sandy Bay in that settlement. He died in late August 1815 and was buried in the cemetery which has now been converted into St. David's Park, (opposite the present Tasmanian Masonic headquarters in Sandy Bay Road) Hobart with Masonic honours.

A diary entry for 1 September 1815 by the Reverend Knopwood records that:

At 3.00 pm I buried Mr. Lucas from Browns River. He has been a marine that came out when the settlement at Pt. Jackson was formed, then became a settler and went to Norfolk Island. There he remain'd till the island was evacuated; most of the settlers came to this colony. He was a Mason, and buried by the Brothers in Masonic form.

Prior to the evacuation, several brethren, 'for the Brethren' addressed a letter to the Commandant of the island in the following terms:

Norfolk Island Dec 13th 1807

Sir,

Impressed with a lively sense of Gratitude for the Patronage and generous protection which we in our collective capacity as Free and Accepted Masons have experienced under your Authority; we now beg leave to request your acceptance of our sincerest acknowledgements.

It is an Axiom, founded on the Pediment of the Masonic Institution, that a Mason's Conduct should be orderly, regulated by a strict adherence to the laws, and particularly obedient to regular legislative Authorities; we humbly presume from the affability of your demeanour and the politeness of your attention to us as a Collective Body, that our Conduct has received your approbation; and consequently that no Impeachment of a deviation from good Order can be attached to our small Community; and as Circumstances require our departure from this Island, and from your Jurisdiction (under which we have received such marks of liberal protection) we request you may be pleased to recommend to his Honour Lt Governor Collins, our general demeanour, and secure to us under his Command, a Continuance of that patronage, we have received from you, and we shall studiously exert ourselves, by the Regularity of our demeanour, to prove that your kind indulgences shall never be impeached by impropriety of Conduct on the part of,

Sir,

Your ever grateful servants,

JAS. MITCHELL, Master.

THOS. LUCAS, P.M.

W. ATKINS, S.W.

John Piper Esq

&c &c &c

For the Brethren.

Transcription of the 'Piper' letter

From the above some idea of the importance of the Lucas apron to the story of Freemasonry in Australia can be gleaned. As with many such repositories, the Grand Lodge of Tasmania Library and Museum has numerous treasures, but, as is so often the case, the real treasures are the stories behind the objects.

Norfolk Island Dec. 18th 1807 - Vol

Sir,

I propose with a living sense of gratitude for the Patronage, and generous protection which we in our collective capacity as Free and accepted Masons have experienced under your Authority; We now beg leave to request your acceptance of our sincerest acknowledgments.

"It is an Axiom founded on the Ediment of the Masonic Institution, that a Masons Conduct should be always regulated by a strict adherence to the Laws, and precepts of the Order; obedient to regular legislative Authorities; We humbly presume from the respectability of your demeanor, and the politeness of your attention to us as a collective Body; that our Conduct has not your approbation; and consequently that no Impairment of a deviation from good Order can be attached to our small Community; and as Circumstances require our departure from this Island; and from your Jurisdiction (under which we have received such marks of liberal protection) we request you may be pleased to recommend to His Honor G^o Gov^r; Collins, our general demeanor, and success to us under his Command, a Continuation of that Patronage, we have not from you, and we studiously exert ourselves by the Regularity of our demeanor to prove that your kind indulgences shall never be impeached by any impropriety of Conduct on the part of Sir,

your ever grateful servants

John Piper Esq^r

St. St. St.

J. Pittman Master

Thos Lucas R. W.

W. A. King & M

To the Brethren