

Provincial Grand Lodge of Worcestershire

LIBRARY AND MUSEUM COMMITTEE

' MASONIC TREASURES AT WORCESTER. '

MAY, 1952.

ORIGIN.

The inception of the present Masonic Library and Museum of the Province of Worcestershire was largely due to the late Wor. Bro. George Taylor P.M. Lechmere Lodge No. 1874, who organised a Masonic Exhibition, which was held in the Guildhall, Worcester, in August 1884 under the auspices of the then Provincial Grand Master, R. Wor. Bro. Sir Edmund A. H. Lechmere, Bart and the Mayor, W. Bro. William B. Williamson for this Exhibition, to which Brethren from all over the country loaned books, medals, jewels and curios, W. Bro. Taylor (who was at this time Prov. Gr. Sec.) compiled a catalogue, the archaeological and descriptive notes to which were written by W. Bro. W.J. Hughan.

Of over a thousand items in the Exhibition, W. Bro. Taylor himself contributed nearly a hundred. There were other prominent helpers, and the list in fact included the name of every prominent student and collector of the time. The Worcester Lodge (No. 280.) exhibited an interesting series of prints and a few books, including copies of all the early works written by W. Bro. Hughan which were already becoming difficult to procure.

The Exhibition, the first of its kind in this part of the country, must have led many local Brethren to appreciate, as they never had before, the wealth of interesting material available, and so much of it came from Masons in the Province itself, that the Provincial authorities realised the possibilities of forming their own library and Museum. W. Bro. Taylor had for long been an ardent collector and all his Masonic treasures were then acquired (at cost) by Provincial Grand Lodge. For the collection thus inaugurated he compiled a Catalogue in 1891 to which W. Bro. Hughan once more contributed elucidatory and archaeological notes as well as a brief introduction. The bibliographical section of that catalogue contained about six hundred items.

With the object of bringing this most interesting collection more prominently before the Province, a Committee was formed in 1912, and on this representatives are elected annually by Lodges, Chapters, etc. The formation of this Committee was due in no small measure to the late W. Bro. Charlie D. Eaton, P.G.D., of the Lechmere Volunteer Lodge No. 1874, of whom many still have vivid and affectionate memories. The present Chairman is of course W. Bro. F.J. Underwood (P.A.G.D.C.) P.M. 280.

I think I should make my first reference to the 'Old (manuscript) Charges', which were aptly described by W. Bro. Underwood as the 'title deeds of the Order'; we in Worcestershire possess four such manuscripts, and it is considered one of the best collections in the Provinces. The four comprise:-

'The Wood M.S. A.D. 1610.
'The Lechmere M.S. A.D. (late 17th century).
'The Inigo Jones M.S. Circa 1720.
'The Woodcock M.S. Circa 1715.

There are numerous others (in the Library and Museum at Grand Lodge and elsewhere) many of which appear to have been copied from similar documents some of which have been lost. Two of them date to about the 14th century and throw much light upon the traditions, usages, and customs of the medieval operative masons. 'The Charges of a Freemason' printed as a preface to the Book of Constitutions of the United Grand Lodge of England, have been largely based on the 'Old Charges' and happily preserve many of their more important 'Articles and Points'.

As previously stated, it is certain that there have been many valuable manuscripts lost or destroyed. It is known, for example, that the London Company of Freemasons had in its records of 1676 the item - 'Book of the

Constitutions of the Accepted Masons', but, unhappily, this book has disappeared.

Dr. Anderson in his first 'Constitutions of Grand Lodge' stated that valuable manuscripts had been burned by '(over) scrupulous Brothers' to prevent their falling into strange hands, and one or two masonic commentators have expressed their belief that on this occasion Anderson was reciting simple fact! These Old Charges were read in Operative Lodges, and the practice was continued in the Speculative Lodges for sometime after 1717.

ENGRAVED LISTS.

The 'Engraved List' was actually a list of Lodges done up in booklet form. It indicated where each Lodge met and the days of meeting. As you are no doubt aware Lodges of the 18th. century mostly met in taverns and/or inns, and in the early years had no names as now, but only a number, and were therefore distinguished by the name or sign of the tavern. Thus the four old Lodges which combined to form - or revive - Grand Lodge in 1717 were those which habitually met at:-

The Goose and Gridiron, St. Paul's Churchyard
The Crown Alehouse, Nr. Drury Lane.
The Apple Tree Tavern, Covent Garden. and
The Rummer and Grapes, Westminster.

The earliest reference to a Lodge in Worcestershire is the one which met at the Talbot Hotel in Stourbridge. It was constituted (not consecrated) in 1733, numbered 119, became No. 62. in 1755, and was finally erased in 1769.

These 'Engraved Lists' were thus the forerunner of the Masonic Year Book. The Engraved List printed and sold by Benj. Cole for the year 1763 is very rare. In fact only two copies are known to exist, one in Grand Lodge Library and the other in our Library and Museum.

THE CONSTITUTIONS (as distinct from the Old Charges).

It is generally thought that the first book of Constitutions published in 1723 and written by Dr. James Anderson, D.D., was issued with full authority of Grand Lodge. This is not quite correct for there is a Minute in the Minute Book of the Grand Lodge for June 24th. 1723, which states that the Constitutions had before been approved in manuscript form by G.L. and had already been produced in print and approved. Then occurred something (possibly as a result of debate) that qualified this approval of the manuscript of Anderson. The Minute states, "The question was moved - that the General Regulations be confirmed so far as they are consistent with the Ancient Rules of Masonry." The previous question was moved and put whether the words above quoted 'be part of the question', Resolved in the affirmative, but the Main Question was not put!

In 1756 the Rev. John Entick, M.A. revised the whole of Anderson's Constitution with full authority from G.L. Nevertheless, Anderson's Constitutions formed the basis of the Irish (1730), and American (1735) Constitutions, and exerted immense influence throughout the World in the Transmission of the principles and tenets of the Craft.

In talking about 'Constitutions' some reference must be made to Ahiman Rezon, copies of all the editions of which, repose in the bookcases at Worcester. Ahiman Rezon was, as most of you will probably know, the name given by the 'Antient' or 'Athol' Masons to their version of the Constitutions. On July 17th. 1751, the 'Antient' Grand Lodge was formed and styled itself 'The Most Antient and Honourable Society of Free and Accepted Masons', in opposition to the Premier Grand Lodge, formed as previously stated, in 1717. This Grand Lodge came into being for a variety of reasons. In 1723 there was printed in three issues of 'The Flying Post or Postman', an article entitled 'A Mason's Examination' which purported to lay bare to the general public the secret workings of the Freemasons. Then in 1730 Samuel Pritchard published his notorious so called exposé 'Masonry Dissected', which ultimately ran into many editions in England, Ireland, America and the Continent of Europe. (Further reference to our collection of 'exposures' will be made later).

① The first recorded minutes of Grand Lodge.

By 1730 Freemasonry had spread widely and a number of unaffiliated masons from Ireland, Scotland and France were claiming admission to Lodges in England, bringing with them different modes of working. These visitors were a source of anxiety to G.L., and because of this, (and possibly on account of the so called exposures) the Premier G.L. resorted to panic measures. Therefore, in order to make things difficult or impossible for these clandestine brethren, Grand Lodge decided in 1730 to transpose the modes of recognition in the first and second degrees; the object being to detect and debar those who did not owe allegiance to the G.L. of England.

This was regarded by many of its members, and of course by those outside its jurisdiction, as an unwarrantable interference with one of the Ancient Landmarks of the Order, and for the next twenty years considerable unrest was rife among the Lodges. To cut a long story short the dissident brethren, lead by (that now famous) Irish Mason, Lawrence Dermott, formed a separate Grand Lodge, and retained the old modes of recognition. On this account, they styled themselves 'Ancients' and dubbed the Premier Grand Lodge, 'Moderns'.

These two Grand Lodges were to exist side by side for over sixty years, until in 1813 the two Jurisdictions were combined in the 'United Grand Lodge of Ancient Free and Accepted Masons of England'. ~~(now to the)~~

Now to THE,

EXPOSURES.

Much has been written on the subject of the so-called 'Masonic Exposures' - documents, pamphlets, books and prints were issued purporting to disclose to the curious and unenlightened public, the 'Secrets of the Freemasons'. Following the formation of Grand Lodge in 1717 the number of Lodges and brethren increased considerably. Members of the nobility began to join which thereby gave prominence and publicity to the Order.

a) The selection and installation on 24th June, 1721, of the first noble Grand Master in the person of John, Duke of Montague, undoubtedly gave the Fraternity a further great filip.

b) The inveterate habit of our brethren of those days, of walking in public procession clothed with the 'badges of the order' was another factor.

c) The connection between certain members of the nobility and the theatre too, was so strong, that the initiation of noblemen (and of course wealthy gentlemen) may well have begun in a Lodge belonging to, or associated with one of the theatres; in the opinion of one authority, (W. Bro. Bernard Jones, Prestonian Lecturer 1952) the introduction of 'bespeaks' may well have been a theatrical rather than a masonic origin.

d) The Church of Rome also contributed to the publicising of Masonry when Pope Clement XII in 1738, and Benedict XIV in 1751 issued their Bulls denouncing Freemasonry.

In the early 18th century (as in 1952) the journalist and writer is constantly on the lookout for 'news'. The general public was intrigued, they wanted to know more and due to the causes mentioned, Masonry became 'NEWS'. Pamphleteers and Artists quickly obliged. The information, purporting to rip open and expose to the light of day, the dark secrets of Masonry, was vouched for in such books as 'The Grand Mystery of Free-Masons 1724' or 'The Beginning and First Foundation of the most worthy Craft of Masonry' 1739. Then of course there was Richard Carlile's 'Manual of Freemasonry', Samuel Prichard's 'Masonry Dissected' (already referred to) and a number of others, all of which can be seen at, and may be borrowed from, the Provincial Library.

CHINA and GLASS.

There is an excellent and most interesting collection of glass, china and earthenware pieces on view, all of which, for varying reasons claim the attention of the expert and inexpert alike. Among the china are two pairs of figure ornaments. They represent male and female characters in 18th century dress, and at the foot of each figure is a German pug-dog. These ornaments were related to a Society formed in Austria by a Duke of Bavaria styled the 'Mopses'. 'Mops' is German for pug-dog, and the Society adopted the effigy of the Mops as its emblem of Love and Fidelity. As previously stated, in 1738 the Pope had issued a Bull

condemning and forbidding the practice of the rites of Freemasonry. Several brethren in the Catholic States of Germany, unwilling to renounce the Order and yet fearful of offending the ecclesiastical authority, formed in 1740 the Society of the Mopses. It pretended to be a new association, devoted to the papal hierarchy, but was in truth nothing else than Freemasonry under a less offensive appellation. It was patronised by the most illustrious persons in the land, and many princes of the Empire became its Grand Master. In 1776 the Mopses became an androgynous order, and admitted females to all the offices except that of Grand Master (was held for life). There was, however a Grand Mistress, and the male and female heads of the Order assumed alternately, for six months each, the supreme authority. Apart from these, there are in the Museum, numerous examples of Sunderland, Worcester, Delft, Wedgwood and Chelsea ware, all of which have some Masonic significance. There are some pint earthenware mugs with masonic emblems worked into the decorative designs. On the inside of one mug, about half way down, is the life-size effigy of a frog, which is revealed as the liquor falls in level while drinking. What a terrible shock it must have been to the unwary tippler? As to the glassware this must be seen to be properly appreciated.

PRINTS, PLAY-BILLS, etc.

Reference has already been made to the books and pamphlets written and issued with the object of pouring scorn on the Craft and with the (suspected) hope that they would be the means of pouring money into the pockets of the authors. The engravers did not lag far behind the authors, and there is a good example of this in a framed engraving by A. Benoist, hanging in the Museum, which has the following caption:-

"A Geometrical View of the Grand Procession of the Scald* Miserable MASONS, designed as they were drawn up against Somerset House, in the Strand on 27th April annoe 1742. (price 2/6d)"

* (diot.) - scabby, scurvy, paltry, poor

It is a panoramic view of the oddest assortment of characters passing down the Strand lined by the populace. The various sections of the procession are described by means of the following key:-

- 1) 'The Grand Sword-bearer of Tylor' (sic), (mounted on a horse leading procession) 'carrying the Sword of State, a present of Ishmael Abiff, King of Saracens, to His Grace of Wartin, Grand Master of ye Holy Lodge of St. John of Jerusalem in Clerkenwell'.
- 2) 'Tylers of Guards'.
- 3) 'Grand Chorus of Instruments' (i.e. nine men blowing wind-instruments - they were preceded by -)
- 4) 'The Stewards in three Gutt Carts' (two in each) 'drawn by Asses' (each appears to be wearing a square appended to a collar).
- 5) 'The Famous Pillars'.
- 6) 'The Three Great Lights, the Sun, Hieroglyphical to rule the day, the Moon, emblematical to rule the night, a Master, Political to rule his Lodge'.
- 7) 'The Entered Prentices Token' (two clasped hands).
- 8) 'The letter G. famous in Masonry for differencing (sic) the fellowcrafts Lodge from that of Prentices'.
- 9) 'The funeral of a Grand Master according to ye rites of the Order with fifteen loving Brethren' (all with handkerchiefs to eyes, crying), (shews large farm cart drawn by six asses).
- 10) 'A Master Mason's Lodge' (engraving depicts T.B.3dg. on two long poles).
- 11) 'Grand Band of Music' (Drummer on horseback, followed by eight children with wind instruments) - (these are preceded by:-)

- 12) 'Two Trophies', one being that of a Black Shoe-boy and Link-boy, the other that of a Chimney Sweeper (tools of calling mounted on long poles).
- 13) 'The Equipage of the Grand Master, all ye attendants wearing mystical jewels' (four figures seated in a large farm cart - one with an Asses head, one with a Sheep's head - drawn by six asses with postillions).

Turning to other prints, there is a most interesting set engraved by Falser between the years 1809 and 1812. The set consists of 7 prints, 2 depicting the "Apprentice" degree, and five the "Master's" (M.M.) degree.

[Notice:-

- a) I.C. on floor.
- b) Others waiting (covered).
- c) Two Ps - J l. B r. (reversal).]

These are copies of some French prints done about 1738, the originals of which are in the Museum. In comparing the French prints with the English it is intriguing to note that the latter show the scenes reversed.

Time does not permit reference to many other engraved items, and a personal inspection in the Museum will repay amply those who are interested in this branch of Masonic study. - now a few words on;

MASONIC MEDALS, JEWELS, etc.

Here of necessity, this big subject can only be but lightly touched upon in this paper. In fact the Worcester collection has a catalogue all of its own consisting of over 100 pages, and treating more than 1,400 items. At the end of this catalogue are 48 beautiful plates illustrating medal items described in the preceding pages of text.

It was edited by W.Bro. the Rev. H. Poole, P.A.G. Chap and P.M. of Quatuor Coronati Lodge No. 2076. From the Introduction which W.Bro. Poole wrote, I quote:-

'The study of Numismatics, which is usually understood as embracing coins and medals, is not only in itself one of the most attractive of the side-lines of history, but it is in a real sense one (and probably not the least) of its hand-maid. For on the one hand, there is perhaps nothing which more forcibly impresses on one the reality of the past, than the coin of a Monarch, or the medal commemorating an event; and, on the other hand, the Historian, not to mention the Archaeologist, has often to rely for his information, or for its confirmation, on the numismatic evidence available'.

'----- the very earliest known piece relating to British Freemasonry - the Sackville medal, struck in Florence in 1733 (Cat. item one), - places on record the probability, otherwise unsuspected, that Charles Sackville, later Duke of Dorset, became Master of a Lodge during his stay in Florence in that year'.

Among the non-Masonic medals is one (No. 195 in Cat.) issued by the 'Order of the Gormorgons'. It is thought that the specimen at Worcester was issued about 1795. Of this strange Society A.E. Waite in his great work 'A New Encyclopedia of Freemasonry' Vol. 2 p. 420 writes:-

'Proclamation of the Rite). The Gormorgons were first heard of in 1724 by a flamboyant announcement in the "Daily Post", which made known to all who were concerned:-

- a) That the Ancient and Noble Order was founded by the first Emperor of China many thousands of years before Adam. That its O.V.* was the great philosopher Confucious.
- b) That it had been brought recently to England by a Mandarin.

- c) That he proposed to hold a Chapter at the Castle Tavern in Fleet Street, at the request of some persons of quality.
- d) That he had already admitted to its Mystery several gentlemen of honour.

* (O.V.) = Occumenical Volgee, presumably head of the order).

The condition of entry on the part of any Mason was to renounce his "Novel Order". For the rest, the advertisement or proclamation registered - as a point of fact - that the Grand Mogul and the CZAR of Russia had already been received into this Honourable Society, and - as a point of intention - that the Mandarin would set out presently for Rome to initiate His Holiness, when it was believed that the Sacred College of Cardinals would come bodily within the ranks.

One would have said that the announcement was only a heavy jest - and typical of the period. This, however, was not the case. The Society was either established in due course, and that quickly, or it had come into existence previously. In the following month other newspapers reported that eminent Freemasons had renounced or "degraded themselves" from their Order, and had become GORMOGONS.

In December several journals printed as news of the day that at the Castle Tavern "a peer of the first rank, a noted member of the Society of Freemasons, hath suffered himself to be degraded as a member of that Society, and his leather apron and gloves to be burnt, and thereupon entered himself as a member of the SOCIETY OF GORMOGONS".

It is of general consent that this peer was the notorious Duke of Wharton, who for a brief period had figured as Grand Master of Masons and had done what lay in his power to compromise the Order.

The GORMOGONS were still meeting - how frequently or occasionally there is no knowing - in the year 1731, according to the press of that date, while an extant medal of the Society suggests by its inscription that it had not passed utterly out of being in the year 1797'.

The Rev. Poole suggests that the Society ^{ad} may have had some connection with the Jacobite movement.

Mention, however, brief, must be made to the 'Shackles Collection' of which this Province is justifiably proud. Bro. Poole in his introduction to the Catalogue, says 'But the crowning glory of the Worcester Museum is the collection brought together during some forty years, by the late Bro. George L. Shackles of Hull. This enthusiastic collector spared neither trouble nor expense in his interesting hobby; and with the help of correspondents in various European countries and America, succeeded in amassing some 1,700 medals, nearly all of them in superb condition. xxx x the result of his efforts was what must have been the finest private collection ever gathered together, and this collection was secured for the Worcester Museum shortly after his death in 1926.

There is a Medal struck to commemorate the erection of Freemasons Hall in 1780, which each brother who subscribed to the building fund received. It was thus the forerunner of the 'Million Memorial Jewel'.

There are examples of copper tokens which were struck in Birmingham, due to the shortage of coins from the Mint. Bro. Sketchley who was at one time Prov. G. Sec. of Warwickshire, who was responsible for these. There are also some beautiful examples of 'pierced' jewels.

CONCLUSION.

In conclusion, Brethren, may I hope that these brief references to the treasures in our Provincial Library and Museum, have stimulated some interest, and that you will wish to take the earliest opportunity to visit the Masonic Hall., Worcester.

'Brief' is hardly the word to use, for there is much more of great interest that can be seen, and [W. Bro. Nash,] the Librarian, will be only too pleased to welcome you individually or in a party, and to conduct you round the Museum, describing and explaining from expert knowledge, the various exhibits of absorbing interest. We, Brethren of the Province of Worcestershire, owe to ^{as late} W. Bro. Underwood a great debt of gratitude, for he,

with the unfailing eye of an expert, [has] added to the original collection of W. Bro. Taylor, numerous items which are of great Masonic importance and in value - Priceless!

There is much more in Freemasonry than merely memorising the ritual and in making a regular attendance at one's Lodge. To the brother with an enquiring mind there are many avenues of profitable study, and in the Prov. Library and Museum we have the means ready at hand - it is up to you, Brethren to use them wisely and well.

And just one last word to you all - it is reasonably certain that reposing in lofts and other receptacles are documents, letters, books, jewels, china and glassware, which may be of use in enabling the experts to fit one more piece into the jig-saw of Masonic history. So, Brethren, if you have (or come across) some family heirloom, or know of any object which has some Masonic significance, and [even] if you are not sure, have it examined by some competent member of the Craft, before disposal.

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