

WHY THE UNITED GRAND LODGE OF ENGLAND

Brethren, if I were to ask you the name of the Society of which you are now a member, I doubt whether most of you would be able to answer that question. Brethren are Initiated into Masonry, passed through the several degrees, and Officers finally being Installed into the chair as Worshipful Master, and even after Installing their successor are still unaware of many sides of Freemasonry ^{other} ~~toher~~ than the ritual which they have had to learn to enable them to progress through their respective Lodges.

For your information and the presentation of this talk, the name of the society of which we are members is:-

THE UNITED GRAND LODGE OF ANTIENT FREE AND ACCEPTED MASONS OF ENGLAND.

This however was not always the case as you will find from this talk. W.Bro. Harry the great Masonic Historian and reasearcher of modern times, informs us that there were Lodges in Scotland the earliest minutes surviving ^{ARE OF} the Lodge of Edinburgh 1599, this Lodge still meets today. The Oldest minutes are those of the Lodge of Aitchison's Haven dated 1598, but this Lodge disappeared in the eighteenth century.

Though there were known to be Lodges existing in the late 17th Century, and early 18th Century, we have to look to the year 1717 for the beginning of our talk.

When we speak of a Grand Lodge today, we think immediately of a nation-wide or world-wide organisation - the headquarters and controlling centre for literally hundreds of thousands of Masons spread all over the world. But the First Grand Lodge was nothing like that. It was not a Grand Lodge of England, indeed it might almost be fair to say that it was not even a Grand Lodge of London. It was founded by four Lodges meeting at taverns in London and Westminster, with a "few old Brothers", (probably unattached

Masons), who joined with them. They were the Lodges which met at:-

1. the 'Goose and Gridiron' ale house in St. Pauls Churchyard;
2. the 'Crown' ale house in Parker's Lane, near Dury Lane;
3. the 'Apple Tree' tavern in Charles St. Covent Garden;
4. the 'Rummer and Grapes' tavern in Channel Row, Westminster.

The declared objects were simple. ("they thought fit to cement under a Grand Master as the Centre of Union and Harmony") and so they met, "Constituted themselves a Grand Lodge Pro Tempore, and resolv'd to hold the Annual Assembly and Feast and then choose a Grand Master from among themselves, till they should have the Honour of a Noble Brother at their head". And then "by a majority of hands elected Mr. Anthony Sayer, Gentleman, Grand Master of Masons and Capt. Joseph Elliot and Mr. Jacob Lamball, Carpenter, Grand Wardens.

The earliest minutes which have survived of this Grand Lodge begin in 1723, so we have no records of the actual Proceedings written down at the time, and even the brief notes covering the period 1717 to 1723, (from which the quotation was drawn), were not written until 1738, when Dr. Anderson included them as part of the preliminaries to his second book of Constitutions.

There may have been several other Lodges in London in 1717, in addition to the four which participated, but we cannot be sure. Reading between the lines of Anderson's sketch of what took place, it seems fairly certain that this new body originally constituted pro-tem, had no nation wide ambitions. All it wanted was a Grand Master and an Annual Festival; and a study of Anderson's first Book of Constitutions, 1723, seems to show that the Annual Feast was at least as important as the Grand Master

The organisation, limited in its conception, and apparently without specific aims of any importance, drifted during its first few years, like a ship without a rudder, doomed - so it seemed -

to extinction. Although two or three Brethren of better - than-average mental attainments made their appearance in the first few years, the records - apart from the annual election of the Grand Master and Grand Wardens, show no kind of activity except the Annual Festival, but in 1719, Dr. J.T. Desaguliers, a Fellow of the Royal Society, became Grand Master, new Lodges were constituted, several noblemen joined the Craft, and "several old Brothers, that had neglected the Craft", began to visit the Lodges, perhaps the first real evidence of a widening interest in the new organisation.

In 1721, John, Duke of Montagu became the first Noble Grand Master; two years later, Anderson's Book of Constitutions was published, and the real growth of the Craft may be said to have begun about this time. But Grand Lodge still had powers only over those Lodges that chose to come in under its jurisdiction, and a number of Lodges, all over the country, ignored its existence, and went their own ways. The power and influence of the new Grand Lodge was necessarily a slow achievement, largely no doubt because of its small beginnings. It had to earn the respect of the Lodges outside its sphere before they were ready to become its adherents.

Certainly, the publication of the Book of Constitutions was the first public statement of the organisation, and the objectives of the new Grand Lodge. The Principal contents of the book were, of course, the Grand Lodge Regulations, but sandwiched between them were "The Charges of a Free-Mason", under six main headings,

- 1 Of God and Religion
- 2 Of the Civil Magistrate supreme and subordinate
- 3 of Lodges
- 4 of Masters, Wardens, Fellows and Apprentices
- 5 of the Management of the Craft in Working

6 Of Behaviour, viz.(subdivided under six headins).

The first Charge, "Concerning God and Religion", contained a few lines which defined a principle, entirely new in the Craft until that time:-

" A mason is obliged by his Tenure, to obey the moral Law, and if he rightly understands the Art, he will never be a, Stupid Atheift, nor an irreligious Libertine. But though in ancient Times Masons were charged in every Country or Nation, whatever it was, yet 'tis now thought more expedient only to ablige them to that Religion in which all Men agree, leaving their particular Opinions to themselves, that is, to be good Men and true, or men of Honour and Honesty, by whatever Denominations or Persuasions they may be distinguished".

The Craft in 1723, and long before that, was Christian in character, Anderson by this statement was opening the doors of the Craft to honest men of every faith, so long as they belived in God, and today, 260 years later, with the advantage of hindsight, we can see what a great and courages step it was. (Within a few years, the Grand Lodge records show that many prominent and respected Jews were members of the Craft).

The new Grand Lodge was founded on the embers of the Craft in decline, but the flame still flickered, and after a few years revived

Following the influx of noble people into the Craft, it became a very popular society, its membership increased as did the new Lodges, not only in London, but elsewhere. For in 1725 we find Lodges acknowledging the new body in Bath, Bristol Chester, Salford and Warwick and many other places. With this expansion of Masonry, it was not long before "irregular Lodges were

formed and irregular masons made. In its reaction to this situation, Grand Lodge was to sow the seeds of future bitterness and dissension within the Craft for half a century to come.

In the period 1722 to 1730 there was a remarkable public interest in the Craft. For this, the fraternity was, to a great extent itself to blame, for it seemed to go out of its way to invite outside attention, with its public processions etc. The result was an extraordinary profusion of Broadsheets, pamphlets, and newspaper articles on masons and masonry. Some were more than passing references, some were written frankly in praise of the society, whilst others sought to explain its aims and objects, but a very great number were outright attacks or skits. Finally there were the so called Exposures

Although these publications, masonic and anti-masonic, found a ready sale throughout the period, by 1730, however things took a more serious turn when the exposure appeared entitled *The Mystery of Free-Masonry*. In the following October Samuel Pritchard published his notorious *Masonry Deselected*. This publication of this latter book, led to further increase in irregular made masons, many of whom presented themselves in need of the Charity. The Grand Lodge on the threshold of the 1740's seemed full of promise, the number of Lodges both in England and overseas had increased yet, in only a few years its numerical strength was on the wane, its power and prestige weakening, and rising up in counter-attraction to it was a new body of Masons which was to emerge in 1751 as the rival Grand Lodge of the Antients.

This Name stuck to the new Grand Lodge, as they emphasised their preservation of the ancient usages. By contrast, the older Society was soon referred to as the Moderns. No where in the first addition of Ahiman Rezon, is there any expression of unkindness towards the Moderns (the Premier Grand Lodge)

The Premier Grand Lodge **first** attacked the Antients in 1755,

In the second edition of Ahiman Rezon in 1764, a footnote ~~is added that~~ candidates are required to "consider their incomes and families, and know that Freemasonry requires ability, attendance and a good appearance to maintain and support its antient and honourable grandeur".

This is followed by a catechism showing the difference between the Antients and Modern Grand Lodges. The answers denigrate the Moderns, though these are excused because the innovations were made in the reign of George the First, and the new form was delivered as orthodox to the present members. Relative to the accusation made at the time of the Union, that the Moderns neglected prayers in their Lodges, is the inclusion in Ahiman Rezon of Prayers used in the Jewish and Christian Lodges' at the opening and making ceremonies. The Antients also attached importance later to the question of Installation and it is to be remarked that this ceremony received mention at a very early stage in its life.

In 1775, the 4th Duke of Atholl was initiated, passed and raised, and installed Master of the Grand Masters' Lodge, to qualify him for enthronement in March as Grand Master of the Antients Grand Lodge. In order to maintain the standard of their working a resolution was passed which led to the appointment of brethren who came to be known later as "Nine Worthies", nine Masters of London Lodges who were to visit Lodges and report thereon to the Deputy Grand Master, for action if necessary.

The story of the Premier Grand Lodge in the second half of the eighteenth century is a much more troubled one than that of the Antients.

In December, 1777, there was a split in the Lodge No.1. of the Moderns, resulting in Bro. William Preston taking his side of the Lodge and forming a new grand Lodge, entitled, The Grand Lodge

South of the River Trent, under the ^{PATRONS}parentage and support of the Grand Lodge of All England at York.

How long this state of affairs was to go on for no one knew, neither Lodge would recognise one another, and in many cases brethren were members of Lodges ^{IN} both Constitutions. Even some Lodges had Warrants from both Constitutions.

Throughout almost the whole existence of the Antients Grand Lodge there appear to have been ^oprominent Masons desirous of promoting a union between the two societies. At the other end of the scale, Antients Lodges in the Country received Modern visitors and vice versa.

This was far ahead but a hopeful sign of its approach came when a presentation was made to Prince Edward, later Duke of Kent, on his departure from Canada. In 1790 he was made Past Grand Master of the Premier Grand Lodge, but in 1792 he went to Canada on military duty and was appointed Grand Master of Masons for lower Canada under the old Constitutions. He left Canada in 1794 and the Deputy Grand Masters of the two systems there presented him with a joint address, in which the hope was expressed that under his conciliating influence the fraternity of Freemasons in His Majesty's Dominions would soon be united. The next step was taken in December, 1797 when it was proposed in the Antients Grand Lodge that a committee should be appointed to meet one that might be the Grand Lodge of the Modern Masons with view to effecting a Union. The proposal however was not accepted.

There were, however, extraneous forces which made a union desirable. The number of Moderns Lodges in London had decreased from 160 in 1770 to 100 in 1800 and fifteen more were lost before 1813. This may have been due in some part to the disturbances

on the Continent and the war with France, for though the Antients had added thirty to their strength during this period there was definitely a decline in interest in the Craft in the Capital. On the other hand, there was a steady increase, at much the same rate for each society, in the number of Lodges in the Provinces, where continental influences might be less keenly felt. The number of Lodges in London was approximately the same as in the Provinces in 1770, but by 1813 the latter had doubled. Moreover, at a distance from headquarters there was less rivalry between the two systems and personalities were less important.

It is clear, moreover, that even in London there was strong feeling among some highly placed Brethren that there should be early reconciliation. In 1806 Lord Moira was able to tell his Grand Lodge that he had attended the Grand Lodge of Scotland which had expressed the hope that there might be a conciliation between the two Societies in England. He replied that he would support the measure that might be proposed for establishing a union and harmony, but that the Antients had rejected overtures and it was now for them to make the next move. In the same year three members of the Stewards Lodge of the Antients were reprimanded for waiting on the Duke of Kent to ask him to be their Grand Master though no vacancy had been declared. Then in February 1809 the Moderns passed a resolution which removed the greatest obstacle to the union.

That this Grand Lodge do agree in opinion with the committee of Charity that it is not necessary any longer to continue in force those measures which were resorted to in or about 1739 respecting Irregular Masons and do therefore enjoin the several Lodges to revert to the Ancient Land Marks of the Society.

A Lodge of Promulgation was started to consider the principal points of variation between the Antients and Modern practices. To determine what was truly ancient it had the benefit

of advice from brethren who were Antient Masons. Moreover, the Secretary of the Lodge of Promulgation was also the Acting Master of the Lodge of Antiquity and he recorded that it

had adhered to the ancient and had never adhered to the modern practices in the several ceremonies of opening and closing the Lodge and in the modes prescribed for communication ^{of} the peculiar _n secrets in the several degrees.

It is not surprising that the deliberations of the Lodge resulted in recommendations that the Antients usages should be followed, including the adoption of Deacons and of a ceremony of installation of Masters of Lodges. In 1811 the Antients did, however, pass one resolution which brought their practice nearer to that of the Moderns when it was decided :-

That no brother shall be eligible to be elected Master of any Lodge unless he shall have acted for twelve months as Warden in the said Lodge, and that he shall not be entitled to the privileges of a Past Master until he shall have served one whole year in the Chair of his Lodge.

Though overtures were made by the Duke of Atholl to Lord Moriera, ^{MD, RA} a resolution put to the Antients Lodge was rejected. The Grand Secretary of the Moderns wrote to the Antients stating a further meeting was useless unless there was accord.

The Duke of Sussex was Installed on 12th May 1813 as Grand Master of the Moderns, a position he was to occupy for thirty years. The Duke of Kent acted as Deputy Grand Master at his Installation. In April 1813, the Duke of Atholl informed the Antients Grand Lodge that he was going to resign his Office as Grand Master as he was now living in Scotland. In the following August, letters were written to the Antients on the desire of conciliation. Thomas Harper Grand Secretary wrote to the Duke of Atholl to ask instructions. The reply was that he was earnestly desirous of a union.

He stated that he was unable to attend Grand Lodge or meeting at an early date, and that the Duke of Kent should succeed him as Grand Master of the Antients, and that a committee of four including the Duke, should be appointed to meet a similar committee of the Moderns to arrange the details. The Duke of Kent was elected in the November and Installed on 1st December, The Royal Brothers moved quickly to accomplish the union.

The Duke of Sussex was present at his brothers Installation, together with several of his Grand Officers, all of them having been made Antient Masons in the Grand Master's Lodge prior to the opening of the Especial Grand Lodge. The Duke of Kent appointed Thomas Harper to be his Deputy, and the Duke of Sussex and his party withdrew to hold their own Grand Lodge. A Quarterly Communication of the Antients was held at which the new Grand Master announced from the throne () that he and other members of the special committee had held several meetings with their opposite numbers, the happy result of which was that Articles of Union had been signed on 25th November, 1813. Ten resolutions were passed to give effect to the Articles and to empower the Grand Master to affix the Great Seal of Grand Lodge to the documents. Similar resolutions were passed by the Premier Grand Lodge and its great seal was also affixed to the Articles. It was decided to hold a united Grand Assembly at Freemasons Hall on 27th December.

So ended the sixty-two years of the Grand Lodge of England according to the Old Institutions: its work was done. Throughout its existance its members had stood for a return to the formulas of the 1730s, for the recognition of the Royal Arch as an essential part of pure and ancient Masonry, for the necessity of a ceremony of installation for Masters of Lodges, for integrity of the Fund of Benevolence. All these aims were achieved. The Premier Grand Lodge was nearly 100 years old and had passed through many difficult

periods. In spite of these it had set a great example of help to distressed brothers and their dependants and had built the first Freemasons' Hall. It made conclusive moves towards the Union at a critical time. Credit must go to all those brethren of goodwill, in and out of Office and throughout the world, who had shown so clearly that they desired it in the years that preceeded it.

Special mention must be made of those at the head of affairs who worked and used their influence to bring it about; the 4th Duke of Atholl, the Earl Moira, the Duke of Susses, and the Duke of Kent.

On St. Johns Day 27th December, 1813, there was a grand Lodge Assembly of both Grand Lodges, and the Grand Masters placed the Act of Union in the Ark and it was then consecrated

The obligations having been recited by both Grand Masters, and other acting Grand Officers they then divested themselves of their regalia and Bro. James Parry, Past Dep.G.M. of the Antients took the Chair. The Duke of Kent G.M. of the Antients then addressed the Brethren, and proposed his brother, the Duke of Sussex, as Grand Master of the United Grand Lodge for the ensuing year. This was seconded by Bro. the Hon. Washington Shirley, P.G.W. of the Moderns, and carried unanimously. The Installation was arranged for St. Georges day, 23rd April, 1814. The Offices of Deacon and I.G. were introduced.