

PROVINCIAL GRAND LODGE OF WORCESTERSHIRE

LIBRARY AND MUSEUM

MASONIC TREASURES AT WORCESTER

ORIGIN:

Our Ancient Brethren displayed a great ingenuity in finding opportunities of displaying in visible form their love of the Craft, and Masonic emblems may be found on an almost endless series of articles from the more strictly Masonic Items such as aprons, Lodge and Private Jewels through to a variety of forms of Glass, China, Furniture, Paintings, Engravings, down to such forms as Snuff Boxes, Watches and swords, and in order that they should be remembered by Brethren passing by, after their passing to the Grand Lodge above, they caused Masonic Emblems to be carved on their Tomb-Stones some of a most elaborate nature. We in the Province of Worcestershire are very fortunate in having so many of these items for the Brethren to come along and see. This is due to the forthought of Brethren who have gone before us, for in 1884 W. Bro. George Taylor P.M. of Lechmere Lodge No.1874 organised a Masonic Exhibition, which was held at the Guild Hall in Worcester. Brethren from all over the country loaned books, medals, jewels and curios, W. Bro. Taylor compiled a catalogue, the archaeological notes were written by W. Bro. W.J. Hughan, P.S.G.D. Over 1000 items were on show of which over 100 came from W. Bro. Taylors' own collection. There were other prominent helpers, and the list in fact included every prominent collector at the time. The Worcester Lodge No.280 exhibited an interesting series of prints.

The Exhibition the first of its kind in this part of the country, must have led many local Brethren to appreciate, as they had never done 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. Taylors' collection was purchased at cost by the Provincial Grand Lodge, and so the Library and Museum was formed.

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 the Lodges, Chapters etc. Since those early days the Library and Museum has come along way. We now have approx. 5000 books and pamphlets on our shelves, one section of which is a lending Library to the Brethren of the Province. One collection of jewels alone (The Shackles Collection) totals some 1700 and we also have a fine collection of Centenary Jewels (42 of the authorised Jewels and 3 of the 4 unauthorised) the jewels missing being that of the Strong Man Lodge. This latter collection was presented by W. Bro. Charles Eaton, who was Provincial Grand Master of the Mark Degree in the Province.

I feel we should first make reference to the Old (Manuscript) Charges which have aptly been described as the "Title Deeds of the Order"; we in Worcestershire

possess three such Manuscripts, with a fourth for which we have no recognition. It is considered one of the best collections outside Grand Lodge and Yorkshire. This is not to say that there may be more than three such manuscripts held by different individuals in any one Province. The Manuscripts comprise the following:-

The Wood Manuscript.	A.D. 1610	This belonged to the G.L. Family of M.S.
The Lechmere M.S.	A.D. (late 17th Century)	Sloan Family b. Named after the Lechmere Family who purchased it.
The Inigo Jones M.S.	Circa. 1720	Spencer Family
Woodcock M.S.	" 1715	Sloan family.

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SLIDES

There are numerous others (in the Library and Museum at Grand Lodge and elsewhere) many of which seem 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".

There have been many valuable M.S. lost or destroyed. It is known, for example, that the London Company of Masons 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 book of Constitutions of Grand Lodge, stated that valuable M.S. had been burnt 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 some time after 1717.

ENGRAVED LISTS:

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SLIDES

According to Dr. Anderson, "In the Mastership of Dalkieth, a list of all the Lodges was engraved by Brother John Payne in a very small volume, which is usually reprinted on the commencement of every New Grand Master, and dispersed among the Brethren. The earliest preserved appears to be that of 1724. There were two printed in 1725, the older is in G.L. Library and the other in America. The next preserved is for 1729 which was presented to G.L. It is the first which has numbers affixed to the Lodges with their dates of constitution, in accordance with the order of precedence as settled at Grand Lodge held 26th November, 1728. Though they were doubtless regularly published annually, or more frequently between 1725 and 1729, and from then to 1734, it is not until the latter year that we meet with another.

Other years are also lacking, but the list of 1763 resides in the Library at Worcester. Some 40 of these exceedingly scarce engraved lists are carefully treasured in the archives of Grand Lodge, whilst the remainder are amongst rareties of the Libraries of the G.L. Scotland, Massachusetts, New York, and Iowa, The Provincial Grand Lodge of Worcestershire and another sixteen Lodges and Brethren, with one copy held in the British Museum.

These engraved lists indicated where each Lodge met and the days of the meetings. As you are no doubt aware Lodges of the 18th Century mostly met at Taverns and/or Inns, and were known by or distinguished by the name or sign of the Tavern. Thus the four old Lodges which combined to form Grand Lodge or as it has aptly been put by Dr. Anderson Revive G.L. in 1717 where those that met at:-

The Goose and Gridiron, St. Pauls Church Yard.

The Crown Ale House, Dury Lane,

The Apple Tree Tavern, Covent Garden.

The Rummer and Grapes, Channel Row, Westminster.

The Earliest Lodge shown on the engraved list for Birmingham is that in the 1734 list 125 meeting at the Swan Birmingham on the last Monday in the month. In a later edition this Lodge was No. 46 meeting at the Crown Lane in his Masonic Records erroneously gives the Lodge 125 in 1733 meeting at the Swan, Great Brook Street. The interest of this Tavern or Inn rests with its connection with the Lodge 305 (I.C.) held in the 7th Dragoon Guards and with the formation of the Athol Lodge, ~~now known~~ known as No. 74, in 1811. There is quite a story to this hostelry in a hand written book of Meeting Places in Birmingham. It would appear that the swan was situated at the corner of Lawley St. and Great Brooke Street, and that sometime between 1831 and 1835 was renamed the Swan with two Necks. We also find the Shakespeare Tavern, New St. which was built in with the Theatre Royal in 1774 was also a meeting place in 1784 for St. Pauls Lodge, previously Lodge 125 in 1733. In 1814 the Members of 4 Masonic Lodges met at the Shakespear Tavern. These are marked on the Old Map of Birmingham, which you will find on display this evening.

The Engraved Lists were therefore the forerunner of the Masonic Year Book. As I have said the engraved list of 1763 is very rare only two copies known to exist, one in Worcester and one in Grand Lodge.

The Books of Constitution:-

7 slides. It is generally thought that the first book of Constitutions published in 1723 and written by Dr. James Anderson D.D., was issued with the full authority of Grand Lodge. This is not quite correct for there is a Minute in the Minute Book of Grand Lodge for June 24th, 1723, which states that the Constitutions had before

being 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 Antient 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 1738 G.L. issued a Revised addition of Andersons Constitutions.

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

Another rare copy of the Book of Constitutions is that of 1784, which was revised by W. Bro. Northook, by the time the book was printed Northook had become a very embittered man, and wrote the following about Grand Lodge in the front cover of his own copy which we possess. As many of you may know he was the cause of the break up of the Lodge of Antiquity in his opposition to Preston.

In talking about Constitutions, some reference must be made to Ahiman Rezon, copies of all editions of which, repose in the book cases at Worcester. Ahiman Rezon was, as most of you will know, the name given by the 'Antients or Athol Masons' to their versions of the Constitutions. On July 17th 1751, the 'Antients 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 in 1717. This Grand Lodge came into being for a variety of reasons. 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) along with the issue of the Papal Bull, the Premier Grand Lodge resorted to pacific measures. Therefore 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 Antient Landmarks of the Order, and for the next 20 years considerable unrest was rife among the Lodges. Eventually 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 'Antients' and dubbed the Premier Grand Lodge the 'Moderns'.

These two Grand Lodges were to exist side by side for over sixty years, until in 1813 the two Jresdictions were combined into the United Grand Lodge Lodge of Antient Free and Accpeted Masons.

Exposures:

3 SLIDES

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 in 1717 of Grand Lodge, 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 great Filip.

(b) The inveterate habit of our Brethren in 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 for 1952, the introduction of 'beveaks' may well have been theatrical rather than 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 our present time, the journalist and writer is and was on a constant look out for news. The general public was intrigued, they wanted to know more and, due to causes mentioned, Masonry became news. Pamphleteers and Artists quickly obliged. In 1723 were printed in three issues of the Flying Postman, - an article entitled 'Amasons 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 expose 'Masonry Deseected' which ultimately ran into many editions in England, Ireland, America and the continent of Europe. Also in 1724 The Grand Mystery of Freemasons or The Beginning and First Foundation of the most worthy craft of Masonry in 1739. Then of course there was Richard Carlile's Manual of Freemasonry and a number of others, all of which can be seen in the Library at Worcester.

CHINA AND GLASS:

11 SLIDE

There is a most excellent and interesting collection of Glass, China and earthenware pieces on view, all of which, for a variety OF REASONS claim the attention of the expert and the inexpert alike. Among the china are two figures they represent the male and female characters in 18th century dress, and at the foot of the 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 the Papal Bull condemning and forbidding the practice of the rites and Ceremonies of Freemasonry. Several Brethren in the Catholic States of Germany, unwilling to renounce the order yet fearful of offending the ecclesiastical authority, formed in 1740 the 'Society of 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 1746 the Mopses became an androgynous order, and admitted females to all Offices except that of Grand Master. There was however a Grand Mistress, and male and female heads of the order assumed alternately six months each. Apart from these there are in the Museum numerous examples of Sunderland, Worcester, Delft, Wedgewood, Leeds and Chelsea ware, all of which have some Masonic significance. The Glassware must be seen to be appreciated.

Prints and Playbills:

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 a means of pouring money into the pockets of 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 Scald** Miserable Masons, designed as they were drawn up against Somerset House, in the Strand on 27th April 1742. (price 2/6)

** (dict.) - Scabby, scurvy, palty, poor.

Following on the publication of this print in the press of the day, Grand Lodge stopped all processions of Masons in Regalia.

There is also another set of prints, engraved by Falser between the years 1809 and 1812. The set consists of 7 prints, 2 depicting the Entered Apprentice Degree, and five the Masters

Notice:-

- a) The tracing Cloth on the Floor,
- b) Others waiting covered up.
- c) The Ps. - J. & B. (reversal)

These are copies of some French Prints done about 1738, a set of 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.

MEDALS AND JEWELS:

Here of necessity, this subject can only be lightly touched upon in this talk. In fact the collection has a catalogue all of its own, consisting of over 100 pages, and treating more than 1400 items. At the end of the catalogue are 48 plates illustrating medal items described in the preceding pages

The Province is justly proud of its Shackles Collection. 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 George L. Shackles of Hull. This enthusiastic collector spared neither trouble nor expense in his interesting hobby. With the help of correspondents in various parts of the World, he succeeded in massing some 1700 medals, nearly all in superb condition. The result of his efforts must have been the finest private collection ever gathered together.

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 a forerunner to the Million Memorial Jewel.

There are also good 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 this Province, was responsible for these. There are also beautiful examples of pierced jewels.

George Taylor; Bro. Charles Eaton, Bro. F. Underwood, Bro. C. Nash. Bro. F. H. Wilkins. Bro. Dr. R. P. R. Westgate, Bro. R. G. St. George.

In conclusion, may I hope that these brief references to the Treasurers in our Provincial Library and Museum, have stimulated some interest, and that we shall on some future date have the pleasure of a visit from you at Worcester.