

I wonder how many of us think about Freemasonry after we have left a Lodge Meeting?. Or even when we are in a meeting and have no work to do.

Its very pleasant just to sit in Lodge and let the words well loved ritual flow over us and induce a feeling of content, and a comfortable sense of belonging to something that has been around for a long time.

I wonder though how you would answer if I asked you how long you thought that Freemasonry had actually been in existence?

I know that you all realise that your own Lodge has been in existence for 37 years and you take comfort that your Mother's Lodge of Royds dates from 1867 - nearly 120 years ago, and I'm sure that you have a sort of feeling that our Craft is very much older than that.

And if you were asked - "well, how much older?" you might say "Well, it developed from the operative Masons Lodges didn't it?" - "before Grand Lodge was formed in - when was it:???" And then you might remember that there was a Union of Grand Lodges - in 1813, so there must have been more than one Grand Lodge at that time. Yes, of course - the Antients and the Moderns.

Then I am sure that someone who knew would tell you that the Antient Grand Lodge was founded in 1751, but that the Modern Grand Lodge was founded 54 years before that, at the "Goose & Gridiron" a name every one remembers. So you might well ask the obvious question "Why were they called the Antients if they came after the Moderns?"

So then that someone who knew, would tell you about the perfidious French who allowed all the secrets of the Craft to be printed and published for sale on the streets of Paris, and how human nature being what it was then, and still is, how very quickly the idea spread to London, leading to the publication for sale of the complete rituals/signs & words by a number of unscrupulous Brethren, notably one John Prichard who published his book "Masonry Dissected" in 1730.

Insert - 1

Naturally once armed with the signs and words imposters abounded and many were successful in joining legitimate Lodges. So very great was the influx of these illicit cowans and intruders that the Grand Lodge which had been formed in 1717 decided that the only way to stop it would be to change the ritual, and this they did by transposing the signs tokens & words of the first and second degrees, as well as the position of the two great pillars at the porchway or entrance. This had the desired

This had the desired effect, but it also upset a great number of influential Masons who did not like their traditional ceremonies being changed, and they broke away from Grand Lodge and formed their own Grand Lodge, pledged to work only the Ancient rituals. Of course they became known as the "Antients" and the premier Grand Lodge formed 34 years earlier were henceforward the "Moderns".

The Most Ancient & Honourable Society of Free & Accepted Masons

So now we know that there were two Grand Lodges/^{one} dating back to 1717, 150 years before Royds Lodge was consecrated. And if there was a "Grand Lodge" in 1717 there must have been Lodges to form it - so how far back do they go?

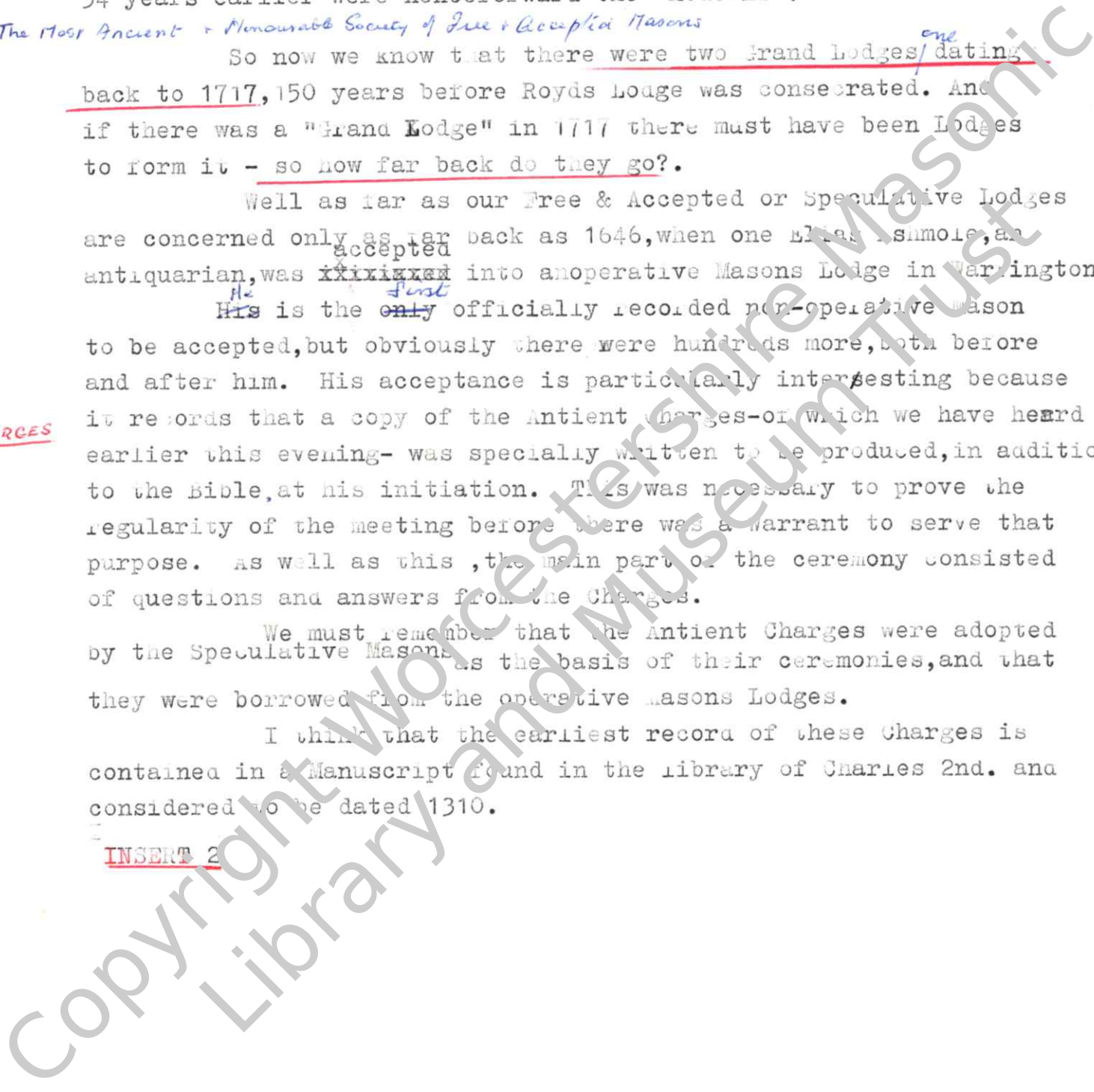
Well as far as our Free & Accepted or Speculative Lodges are concerned only as far back as 1646, when one ^{accepted} Elias Ashmole, an antiquarian, was ~~ixixixix~~ into an operative Masons Lodge in Warrington.

CHARGES
His is the ^{He} ~~only~~ ^{first} officially recorded non-operative Mason to be accepted, but obviously there were hundreds more, both before and after him. His acceptance is particularly interesting because it records that a copy of the Antient Charges - of which we have heard earlier this evening - was specially written to be produced, in addition to the Bible, at his initiation. This was necessary to prove the regularity of the meeting before there was a warrant to serve that purpose. As well as this, the main part of the ceremony consisted of questions and answers from the Charges.

We must remember that the Antient Charges were adopted by the Speculative Masons as the basis of their ceremonies, and that they were borrowed from the operative Masons Lodges.

I think that the earliest record of these Charges is contained in a Manuscript found in the library of Charles 2nd. and considered to be dated 1310.

INSERT 2



The Cooke M/S 1390 - 1410

1310 It opens with thanks to God for all the good things He has vouchsafed to mankind.

It then switches suddenly to say how Geometry first began, it being understood that Masonry & building have their roots in this science.

The usual medieval definitions of the seven liberal arts are given, but the M/S maintains that Geometry is fundamental, being the measure of the earth, and hence the basis of all study of Masonry.

It then names the descendants of Adam and states that Cain built the first city and that Jabal son of Lamech was his first mason. Jabal's brother was Tubal, hence Tubal Cain, the first worker in metals.

These two brothers had a foreknowledge that God would take vengeance for sin, either by fire or by flood, and so they built two pillars, one of marble, which would not burn, and one of burnt brick which would not sink in water. On these two pillars they inscribed all the knowledge they had.

So we come to Noah and the flood and his three sons Shem Ham & Japheth. *Vengeance took its form of THE FLOOD*

After the flood one of the pillars was found by Pythagoras and one by Hermes the philosopher - and they passed on the knowledge written thereon.

Ham is stated to be the father of Nimrod, who became the ruler of Babylon, and built the Tower of Babylon. He "cherished" builders, and taught them the craft of Masonry, sending some of them to build his capital, Nineveh. He gave Charges to them, which have some relation to those discussed later.

The next great person in the story is Abraham, who was a "wise man and a great clerk"

He taught Geometry to the Egyptians, among whom was Euclid.

Euclid in return taught the Egyptians how to build walls to control the Nile floods. He also taught the sons of great Lords the science of Geometry and he also gave them "Charges". In this way the children of Israel learned the craft of Masonry. In due time King David learnt the craft and he too gave the masons "Charges", which were confirmed by Solomon to his builders.

From Jerusalem the worthy science of geometry spread to France and thence to England, gathering even more "Charges" on the way.

At earlier date ⁸⁹⁵ 895 - 939 (939) Athlestan was King of England and did much building. His younger son "loved well the science of geometry" and he became a mason himself. He in his turn gave "Charges" to masons and obtained a patent from the King that they should make assembly when they saw reasonable time to come together and be ruled by Masters and Fellows. Finally it is stated that an assembly shall be held every year, or every third year, the time and place being known beforehand and every mason shall attend. Those who wished to be made Master Masons are to be examined as to their ability to serve their employers by attending a number of Articles and Points. The Manuscript gives fifteen Articles and fifteen points, which bear a remarkable resemblance to our present day Charges, leaving no doubt in my mind that our Charges had their roots there. It has only recently been discovered that the M/S was written by an Augustan monk - or canon - at Llantony Priory near Hereford round about 1402. We know that there was a band of masons working on the Priory at that time and so a copy of the Old Charges would be needed to admit apprentices to the craft and to promote them to Fellows. The monk, moving freely among them would know this and would have facilities for borrowing an even older M/S - possibly from another monastic library. He would not be interested in the legendary history, which he would omit, leaving only the Articles and Points to be copied - some hundred lines we are told out of a total of about two thousand. There are no specific allusions to Masonry, but he does say that masons would benefit greatly from such instruction, and it ends with the couplet
 Amen Amen so mote it be
 To say we all for Charity.

These fifteen Articles and Points - Charges † are of course for operative masons but they bear a striking resemblance to ours.

Having now reached the operative Lodges we can continue right back into history as far as it will go. Past the three Temples at Jerusalem each separated by five hundred years, past the Pyramids to the Year of Light - Anno Lucis

ANNO LUCIS

Wjx Where did the idea come from, and when was the term first used ?.

The creation of the world was generally believed to have been 4000 years before the Nativity, and the Romans referred to it as Anno Mundi.

There is some evidence that the Roman monk who first used the terms "Before Christ" ^{and} "Anno Domini" was not quite as accurate as he might have been in his calculations.

James Usher, Bishop of Down in 1617, working from the dates in the Old Testament gives the date of the Nativity as ~~4004~~ 4004 years after the creation of the world - 4004 B.C. He is supported by the Venerable Bede among others who also put the date of Christ's birth as four years earlier than the one usually accepted, which has given rise to the couplet -

How strange it is for us to see,
That Christ was born in 4BC.

However as masons we appear to have relied upon the Bible printed in Oxford in 1679 which gives the date of the Nativity as Anno Mundi 4000 on the promise that the Messiah would come 4000 years after the creation of the world, or as we call it Anno Lucis - the Year of light.

The first reference to that term masonic-ally was in 1777 on a certificate issued by the premier Grand Lodge dated Anno Lucis 5877. Prior to that a great Masonic historian - Anderson - in his Book of Constitutions dated 1721 uses the English phrase "year of Masonry" and many early masonic documents were dated Anno Masonry, or Anno Mundi. In fact a stone uncovered when the present Bank of England was being built in the 1930s was inscribed with the names of two masons and the Grand Master, Lord Montecute and the date "Anno Masonry 5722".

The first reference to the letters A.L. is in the list of Lodges in 1725, but it is fairly certain that it did not stand for Anno Lucis. Early Masonic jewels bore the words Anno lat 5732, which almost certainly stands for Anno Latomorum which is a word derived from the Greek meaning "of stonecutters".

The letters A.L. were in regular use, but they refer to Anno LITHOMORUM in Minutes in Salisbury and to Anno LATOMIAE in Bristol. Later the Grand Lodge of the Antients used ANNO LAPIDARIORUM - the year of the stonecutters.

In the latter half of the 18th Century until the Union in 1813 the letters AL alone were most commonly

Anno Lucis
cont'd

used, and in fact they appear like that in every Grand Lodge Craft Certificate but they appear in full on every Certificate issued by Supreme Grand Chapter.

Perhaps the ultimate authority is the Articles of Union which say simply " in the year of our Lord "1813 and of Masonry 5813 - no AL or AD

However Anno Lucis wherever it comes from - the Continent, or one of the Higher degrees has now been adopted not only by our own Grand Lodge but by Freemasonry throughout the world.

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CHARGES

~~These obviously were operative Masons Charges, but it isn't very difficult to compare them with our present ritual.~~

~~Now having got back to operative Masonry, there is no end to the time we can go back. - to the time when the first stonemason cut the first block of stone. As we are taught, to ANNO LUCIS. via the three Temples, and the pyramids.~~

INSERT 3 ANNO LUCIS

I mentioned the Pyramids in passing.

It has been established that these great buildings were erected more than three thousand years ago. Whoever the builders were they must have had a very thorough knowledge of geometry as well as stone cutting and building. The largest has been estimated to contain more than four million tons of stone. It had to be cut from the rock, carted to the site, trimmed to the exact shape, raised one block upon another, and all the pieces had to fit perfectly into place.

This must have required tremendous organisation rules and discipline and I have no doubt that it formed the basis of the Old Charges, which, hundreds of years later formed the ritual of the early stone masons guilds - and later still of our Lodges.

As early as the 9th Century we learn that there is evidence of a "Free guild" or "corporation of Masons in Lombardy, and there are records of similar guilds in other parts of Italy. We know that they had a monopoly for the erection of all religious buildings, and that they travelled about Europe in communities or Lodges, subject only to their own laws which were administered by their Masters, and there is little doubt that they came to England.

A great impetus was given to the formation of Trade Guilds during Edward 1st's reign when an act was passed that "all people of mysteries shall choose each his own mystery, and having chosen henceforth shall know no other" It also mentions the Charges which were a legendary history of the crafts and contained rules of conduct to "elevate moral character". I have said before that these Charges form the closest link between operative and "Accepted" Freemasonry.

And now we are back to Elias Ashmole in 1646 - which is where we came in.

PROVINCIAL GRAND LODGE

One of the functions of Grand Lodges was to send out instructors to monitor the ~~xxx~~ work of the Lodges both in London and when travel permitted in those parts of the country known to contain Lodges.

It seems that the Officer we know as the Provincial Grand Master evolved from the Ritual Controllers of the 18th. Century. They came from both the Antient and Modern Grand Lodges. We are told that they were permitted to reward those who deserved it, with Provincial rank - I understand that this privilege dated from 1767.

Most of the Provincial historians I have read refer with pained surprise to the Provincial Grand Masters of those days. It seems that they very seldom did what they were appointed to do that is to visit Lodges, and it appears that very few ever held a Provincial Grand Lodge or conferred Provincial rank. It seems also that no one in either of the Grand Lodges really expected them to do anything of the sort in spite of having given them permission so to act.

The most Grand Lodge appear to have required was for them to issue warrants for new Lodges - until they were prevented from doing so by the "Unlawful Societies Act" of 1799 - and to visit Grand Lodge whenever they happened to be in London, perhaps for Parliament or their own business, or maybe to give warning of any spurious Masons or Lodges in their part of the country.

Of course the 18th Century was the age of sinecures, and I suppose that those early PGM's were not to blame for neglecting duties they knew nothing about. If anyone supposed that they had any this would have been quite a strange new idea.

Sir Walter Wavasour Bt. of Yorkshire when invited to resign in 1733 complied with a charming letter to the effect that if there was any work attached to the appointment, he had not the slightest objection to resigning, since he had always known that he was not fit to hold the office.

One has the impression that any peer baronet or M.P. who was invited to dine with Grand Lodge was apt to be made a PGM irrespective of whether there were any Lodges working in his part of the world or not.

The most absurd instance was our own Provincial Grand Master appointed in 1753 by the Moderns Grand Lodge. He appears in the Year Book and indeed in all the records as " Sir Robert de Cornwall "MP. Both the "Sir" and the "de" were phoney. His father a Vice Admiral had been offered a baronetcy but had

refused it , " not liking the expense in the way of fees " 5
Robert reckoned that he had been cheated out of his dignity and
dubbed himself knight. He also called himself "de Cornwall" as
it appears some of his Corn ish ancestors had done in the Middle
Ages.

Our Province at that time consisted not only of Worcs
but of Glos, Shropshire, Monmouth and North Wales and in all that area
he had only three Lodges under his jurisdiction, and only one of
those was in Worcestershire. That one had been constituted at the
Talbot in Stourbridge twenty years earlier in 1733 - it was erased
in 1769.

He was not a very diligent PGM neither was he very
popular, indeed a Minute in a Staffordshire Lodge contains a
marginal note which says "We take no notice of him!" The Minute
refers to an enquiry from Grand Lodge written to all Lodges to
enquire whether their PGM was alive or not.

Both Harmonic Lodge now 252 and Worcester Lodge 280
were constituted in the period of his office, but he does not appear
to have officiated at either consecration, and he appears to have
vanished from the scene at about that time.

John Dent MP For Lancaster and afterwards for Poole
succeeded him and represented Worcestershire alone in 1792.
He lived at Sudeley Castle, and was a partner in Childs Bank in Temple
Bar in London, . It can never have been likely that such a man would
perform any Masonic duties in our Province. In fact his only claim
to fame seems to be that he introduced the Bill to licence dogs.

We are told that the appointment of a Provincial
Grand Master is the prerogative of the Grand Master. We must
consider that the Grand Masters who made these appointments had no
idea whether they were really necessary or not, and I am sure that
if the duties of our present Provincial Grand Master were to have
been described to them they would have replied that no one would
ever take on that job.

However Provincial Grand Lodges grew without
benefit of a Provincial Grand Master, and it appears likely that
some of the Ritual Controllers appeared as Provincial Wardens, both
in York and later in Chester. We are told that they wore red and
blue aprons, ~~in~~ copied no doubt from the Wardens of Grand Lodge -
the Moderns Grand Lodge, and I think it quite likely that this
regalia appealed to brethren in other Provinces who had to have
them too, and that they formed the nucleus of the early Provincial
Grand Lodges, for obviously the distinction was coveted, and somehow
an excuse had to be found for them to be worn. So I suppose you ~~x~~
could conclude that Provincial Grand Lodges grew from an apron rather

than from a Master.

Those early PGM's who were overcome either by idleness or the complexities of their office cannot have had, or maybe cannot have taken, expert advice, which fortunately is available to every holder of the office today. The tireless and tactful efforts of their Deputy and Assistants, to say nothing of their Provincial Secretaries keep their Chief up to the mark, try to prevent him getting into trouble - or get him out of it if he does.

I doubt if they ever will be rewarded!.

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