

Provincial Grand Lodge

I wonder ^{how often} whether any of you think about the origins of Freemasonry after you have left a lodge hunting

I know that you all realise that your lodge has been in existence for 37 years & no doubt you have taken comfort that your Mother Lodge of Royal dates from 1867 - nearly 120 years ago ~~was~~ and I am sure that you all have at least a sort of feeling that our Craft is very much older than that

And if you were asked you would probably say that "it is derived from ^{the} operative mason's days" is it? before Grand Lodge was formed

And then perhaps you might remember that there was a Union of Grand Lodges - in 1813 - so there must have been more than one G.L. at that time - yes of course the Antients & the Moderns

Then perhaps you would [think of the Antients & the Moderns Grand Lodges and] remember that the "Antients" was founded in 1751 but the "Moderns" were founded ^{34 years before that} as the Goose & Girdron (many remember the Goose & Girdron)

~~1717~~ ¹⁷¹⁷ before the Antients and you might well ask the obvious question why were the Antients recalled, if they came after the Modern Grand Lodge?

- ~~What~~ and then you'd hear about the perfidious French who allowed the secrets of our Craft to be exposed & published ^{INSERT because of this} ~~show~~ the 1717 G.L. transposed the signs & tokens of words of the 1717 and degrees to stop the impostors pretending to be legitimate Brethren - which it did but at the same time upset a lot of traditionalists who dearly love their old rituals being changed & left to form their own G.L.s to continue the Antient Workings. So of course they became known as the Antients & obviously the premier G.L. were known as the Moderns

So we've got back to 1717 - 150 years before Royal was constituted. And if there was a Grand Lodge then there must have been lodges to make it - so - how far back do they go?

Well as far as our Free & Accepted or Speculative Lodges are concerned as any date ^{only} until 16th when Elias Ashmole who was an Antiquary, was initiated into an operative mason's lodge in Warrington

The 17th Century was a time of transition from the Middle Ages to the beginning of modern times

It was also a period of tremendous advances on many fronts - great men - Shakespeare, Bacon, Milton, Pope & the other Elizabethan poets - of expansion in the Universities - opening of streets - improvements in printing - in travel - better roads - better coaches in a word - greatly improved communications

It also saw the emergence of speculative masonry in the lodges of the operative masons of the Society of Masons & when the Great Fire of 1667 brought hundreds of masons & carpenters to rebuild the City - their lodges soon became debased by philosophical or speculative masons

So rapid was the expansion that in 1717 four old & original lodges met at the Goose & Querron in St. Pauls Churchyard to found the Grand Lodge of all England

As all know what happened after that - the exposure of the Masonic Secrets in France & notably spread to England & in 1730 John Puckler published his book 'Masonry Dissolved' which gave the ceremonies in full with the signs, words & tokens exposed to everyone

This of course resulted in a rush by illegal people - the Antient Dales of the time - to obtain the benefits of the lodges including the Grand Lodge & to counter the influx of so many imposters - & the formation of so many clandestine lodges - Grand Lodge decided to retransmit the secrets - signs, grips & words of the first & second degrees

And of course if we are going to think about Operative Masons Lodges we can go back as far as the very first dwelling - pass the three Temples ^{in Jerusalem} ^{& the Pyramids} to ANNO LUCIS

~~THE~~ **THE PYRAMIDS** It has been established that these great buildings were erected more than three thousand years ago. Who ever were the builders they must have had a thorough knowledge of masonry. The larger pieces has been estimated to contain four million tons of stone. This had to be cut ^{from the rock} & hewn to an exact shape raised one block above another and all the pieces fitted perfectly into place.

And it was built on sand ^{remember} so that the foundations must have been well & truly laid otherwise such a massive structure would have sunk into the sand. ^{We are told that there were 150,000 men involved} There must have been many highly skilled masons apprentices & learners - who were their teachers - & for how many hundred years had they been working before this time.

The point I am trying to make is that there must have been a most sophisticated system of discipline to weld such an enormous number of workmen into one force - a system with rules & standards both moral & ethical.

Through all the ages the only buildings built of stone were Temples Castles Cathedrals & Churches. ^{after the Fire of London in 1667} houses until ^{comparatively recently} were made of wood ^{or} wattle & daub - and they ^{the houses etc} by their very nature were built well away from centres of living. The Stone mason building them would have been on a remote site probably for a number of years & must have led an organised life, again with rules & standards, and it is reasonable to assume that modern Masons learned their art & their disciplines from their more ancient Brethren as well as their rules of conduct.

Many ~~the~~ students of Freemasonry have studied the history of the Egyptian ^{religions} ~~builders~~ in ^{its} many ^{forms} & it has been written that more surprising than the identity and manners of the various Orders of ancient priests. There is a singular unity of design running through all their Ceremonies which must have had a common origin. Their Ceremonies are mainly funeral in character & celebrate the death & resurrection of some hero or God. They are concluded in secret. Their doctrines are known only to those who have obtained the

rights of knowledge through a previous initiation. Many of them retain the doctrine of One God the Creator of the Universe & the immortality of the soul - & we can find a similarity with our own ceremonies in those

The site most closely resembling Freemasonry is that of the Draysian Architects which were established in Asia Minor some 1000 years BC & devoted themselves to architectural studies. For the purpose of labour - government they were divided into lodges ruled by a Master & two Wardens. We are told that they employed in their ceremonies many of the implements of their trade which are now used as emblems in Freemasonry. Women were not admitted into the Order and all distinctions of rank outside the Order were abolished. They were expected to help their poorer Brethren & to devote themselves to acquiring knowledge concerning their Craft

Could there have been the skilled Craftsmen who built the Temple at Jerusalem when was started by ^{King} Solomon about 960 B.C.

It is almost certain that it was from this Order (of Draysian Architects) that the ^{King} Persians brought to Rome in about 740 B.C. for the purpose of erecting the many fine buildings in that City. They were given privileges of their own such as government of their body by their own statutes immunity from taxation wherever they worked. They were divided into three classes, the skilled semi skilled & the learners

As you know the Romans invaded Britain in AD 43 & brought with them not only their Army & equipment but administrators & the craftsmen who no doubt left their skills & knowledge to locals when they left

As long ago as the 10th Century there is evidence of a free guild or corporation of Masons in Lombardy & there are records of similar guilds in other parts of Italy & we learn that they had a monopoly for the erection of all religious buildings & they travelled about Europe in communities or lodges, subject only to their own laws which were administered by their Masters

Elias Ashmole whom we have mentioned earlier claims that the first Charter granted to Masons as a body was bestowed

And of course if we are going to think about Operative Masons however we can go back as far as the very first dwelling - pass the three Temples ^{in Jerusalem} & the Pyramids ^{to the Pyramids} to ANNO LUCIS

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by King Athelstone in AD 926 who summoned all masons to meet him in York. They brought with them all the writings & records they had & from these that Assembly framed the Constitutions & Charges of an English lodge (of operative masons)

There is no record left of these ancient regulations but we do have the Cooke Manuscript⁽¹⁴¹⁰⁾ which contain an account of how the Masonic Craft was brought from Asia Minor through Europe, finally reached England

There is definite evidence of a Masonic Craft organization in London in 1356 when the Mayor & Aldermen at the Guildhall together with representatives of mason hivers & mason settlers drew up a code of trade regulations to be observed by all engaged in the Craft. An apprentice apprentice or journeyman was no longer permitted to work alone - a Mason Craftman must always act as overseer

A great impetus was given to the formation of trade guilds by Parliament during Edward III's reign when an Act was passed that "All artificers & people of mystery shall choose each his own mystery & having chosen he shall himself know no other"

It seems that Masonic lodges were formed within the framework of the Guilds of masons and from early 1500 masons were given a secret word of admission to a lodge which appears to have been communicated to them in a sort of acceptance ceremony

They also had Charges which were a legendary history of the craft & rules of conduct to elevate moral character & conduct & these early Charges are one of the closest links between the operative masons of yesterday & the speculative masons of today

I think I have said enough for you to see how our present ceremonies have evolved from our operative Brothers & I had better try to talk a bit about Provincial Grand Lodge

It seems that the officer who we now know as P.G.M. has evolved from the Provincial Controller of the 18th Century. They were the instructors - Proceptors - who travelled under the direction of ^{the} Grand Lodges - both Ancient & Modern - to regulate the ritual & ^{instruct} ~~conduct~~ the lodges in the Ancient Charges & to reward those who assisted in with Provincial work



It was not until the year of 1813 that there was a properly written Constitution with rules for the proper administration of lodges so that the Antient handmarks would be maintained for ever

The Constitution also gave us Provincial Grand Masters who were required to hold a Provincial Grand Lodge at least once a year

From 1767 Provincial Grand Masters were appointed with no reference to any Provincial Grand Officers although in at least one case there was a P.G.M. & some Officers in existence though how they came to be so is quite unknown

Most writers of Provincial histories refer with pained surprise to the P.G.M.s of those early days. They very seldom state what they were appointed to do & visit lodges & they say they never held a Provincial Grand Lodge. But it does seem that no one in Grand Lodge ever expected them to do anything of the sort. The most a P.G.M. seems to have been expected to do was to issue warrants for new lodges - until he was prevented from doing so by the unlawful Statute of 1799 - and to visit Grand Lodges when up in London - perhaps for Parliament or his own business - perhaps to give warning of any spurious masons or lodges in his part of the country

The 18th Century was of course an age of sinecures but the early P.G.M.s can not be blamed for neglecting their duties. If anyone supposed that they had any this would have been quite a strange notion. They themselves seem to have been unaware of any. Sir Walter Navasour Bt of Yorkshire when invited to resign in 1783 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

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

The most absurd instance was that of our first P.G.M. n. 4 appears in the Year Book & indeed in all the records as "Sir Robert de Cornwall 177." but the title 'Sir' & 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". Robert reckoned that he had been cheated out of his dignity & called himself 'Sir Robert'. He also called himself 'de Cornwall' as his ancestors appear to have done in the middle ages.

His Province consisted not only of Worcestershire & Gloucester Herefordshire Shropshire & North Wales & in an area that once he had three lodges under his jurisdiction only one of which was in Worcestershire - at The Talbot in Stourbridge twenty years earlier in 1751 - it was erased in 1769.

He was not a very diligent P.G.M. - neither was he very successful indeed in a minute of a Staffordshire lodge (this is a marginal note which says "take no notice of him"!) - the minute refers to a letter written to all P.G.M.'s to ascertain whether they were dead or alive.

Stammaric lodge was formed in 1784 (presumably to replace the one erased in 1769) at the Talbot in Stourbridge & the Worcester lodge six years later in 1790. Sir Robert does not appear to have officiated at either consecration & he seems to have vanished from the scene about this time.

John Kent M.P. for Lancaster & afterwards for Poole was made P.G.M. for Worcestershire alone in 1792. He lived at Sudley Castle & was a partner in the Bank of Simple Bar London & it can never have been likely for such a man would perform any Masonic duties in our Province. His chief contribution to fame seems to have been that he introduced the Bill for dog licensing.

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

Provincial Grand Lodge is an accident. It grew from the appointment of ~~Provincial~~ Grand Wardens whose job was to monitor the work of as many lodges as they could in London & to instruct & organise them. They dated from the previous Grand Lodge in 1717 & in 1725 Cresser appears to have copied the idea & appointed the first Provincial Grand Wardens.

The Grand Wardens wore blue & red aprons - the Provincial Grand Wardens had to have them too - sooner or later the other Provincial Grand officers must wear them too - including the Provincial Grand Master.

Naturally this distinction was coveted & the problem arises to this day of how to select some without upsetting many others - the most difficult of all a Provincial Grand Master's managements today.

The early P.G.M's who were overcome by the complexities of their office of course cannot have always been taken - expert advice.

This is fortunately available to every holder of the office today. The ^{tireless} & ^{hard} labour of Deputy & Assistant P.G.M's & Provincial Secretaries keep their chief up to the mark ^{try to} prevent him from getting into trouble - & get him out of it if he does. Their work will never be rewarded in any published Provincial History.

A.L. The Year of height

~~The~~ ~~creation~~ etc A.L. where does it come from when was it first used. The creation of the world Anno mundi was generally believed to have been 4000 years before the Nativity. There is some evidence that the Roman monks who first used the term was not quite as accurate as he might have been & The Venerable Bede ^{among others} put the date ^{of Christ's Birth} four years earlier than the one commonly ^{accepted} ~~used~~ which gave rise to the complaint - "How strange it is for us to see that Christ was born in H.B.C."

This was due to James Usher Bishop of Armagh who gives the date of the Nativity as ^{Anno Mundi} 4000 years after the creation of the world, a figure he got from tallying the various dates mentioned in the Old Testament. However a Bible printed in Oxford in 1679 gave the date of the Nativity as ANNO MUNDI 4000, & this seems to have been the generally accepted view that the Messiah would come 4000 years after the creation of the world.

So our term Anno lucis refers to the supposed date of the creation of the world - ~~4000 years~~. The first reference to Anno lucis masonically was in 1777 on a certificate of initiation issued by the Premier Grand Lodge dated 15 Feb Anno lucis 5777. Prior to that a great masonic historian - Anderson in his Book of Constitutions in 1723, uses the English phrase "year of Masonry" & many early documents were dated A.M. - Anno Mundi or Anno Masonry & in fact a stone uncovered when the present Bank of England was being built in the 1930's was inscribed with the names of two Masons, the Grand Master James Oakeley & the date Anno Masonry 5722.

The first reference to ^{H letters} A.L. is in the list of lodges in 1725, but it seems fairly certain that it was ~~not~~ ^{not} stored for Anno lucis. Early Masonic jewels bore the words "Anno hat" - ^{AKAT} ~~AKAT~~ 5732 - which almost entirely stands for "Anno Latomorum" - a word derived from the Greek meaning "of stonemasons".

The letters A.L. were in regular use, but they refer to "Anno LATOMORUM" in minutes in Salisbury & to "Anno LATOMIAE" in Bristol. Later the Grand Lodge of the Antients used Anno LAP - LAPIDARIORUM - "the year of the stonemasons".

But from the latter half of the 18th Century until the Union in 1813 the letters alone A.L. were most commonly used & in fact they appear like that on every Craft Certificate issued by Grand Lodge - but they appear in full Anno lucis

Perhaps the ultimate authority ^{are} the Articles of Union which simply say
in the year of our Lord 1813 and of Masonry 5813 - No A. L. or A. D.
However 'Anno huius' wherever it came from - the Colonnade of form one
of the Higher Degrees has now been adopted not only by our own United
Grand Lodge but by Freemasonry throughout the world.

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