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**COLLECTED STUDIES IN THE
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I INTRODUCING FREEMASONRY

Behind the Square: Spatial Analysis and Research into Freemasonry

*Paper to Electronic Cultural Atlas Initiative
Conference, British Library, 27 June 2000*

Despite the exciting new technical possibilities that have recently become available to humanities scholars, we are still at an early and tentative stage in our exploration of the possibilities of humanities computing. For many years, it has been predicted that new technologies will deliver a paradigm shift in humanities research, but, despite the many outstanding projects currently under way, such a transformation still often seems a distant prospect. We are only just reaching the stage where we can contemplate using new technologies to move forward to new orders of humanities scholarship. As an increasing number of electronic corpora become available, we will begin to formulate questions which could not have been conceived through the use of conventional media. At present, the questions with which our research is concerned are usually generated by conventional methodologies, even when we use new technologies in trying to answer them. Digital and networking technologies will only start profoundly to

transform humanities research when they help shape the research agenda at the very beginning, when the fundamental problems to be addressed by a particular project are formulated.

To illustrate the point, I would like to talk about what is for me a completely new area of investigation I am currently developing within the Humanities Research Institute at the University of Sheffield. Although I have been involved in a number of electronic projects in completely different fields, it is striking how, in appraising a completely new area of research, one's initial analysis is nowadays fundamentally shaped by the new electronic tools that are available. This does not just affect the methods of investigation that will be used. I believe it will also affect the way in which the research is presented and the methods by which the results of the research are synthesised.

In 1969, the distinguished Oxford historian, J. M. Roberts, published an article in the *English Historical Review* called 'Freemasonry: Possibilities of a Neglected Topic'. Roberts pointed out that freemasonry began in Britain, and that the first grand lodge was established in England in 1717. From England, it rapidly spread through Europe, and by 1789 there were perhaps 100,000 masons in Europe. Roberts emphasised that, despite the fact that freemasonry is one of the social movements of British origin which has had the biggest international impact, it has been largely ignored by professional

historians in Britain. This contrasts with, say, France or Holland where freemasonry has been the subject of elaborate scholarly investigation. Because of the neglect of this field by British historians, it has been dominated by, on the one hand, anti-masonic conspiracy theorists, and, on the other, by masonic antiquarians investigating details of ritual or bureaucratic development with no sense of broader historical context.

Yet one look at a photograph like this, which shows Edward VII, one of the most active and influential English Grand Masters, and his brothers, the Duke of Connaught and the Duke of Clarence, in their masonic regalia, suggests how freemasonry is deeply embedded in British life and is a subject deserving of thorough historical investigation. As Roberts forcefully puts it, 'There must surely be something of sociological interest in an institution whose English Grand Masters have since 1721 always been noblemen and have included seven princes of the blood, while elsewhere the craft has been persecuted by the Nazis, condemned by Papal Bulls and denounced by Comintern'.

Since Roberts wrote, the area has received more attention from professional historians. David Stevenson has investigated the emergence from the old craft guilds of something recognisably akin to modern speculative freemasonry in the Scotland of James VI. Stevenson became the first non-mason to address the Quatuor Coronati lodge, the English masonic lodge devoted to

investigating masonic history. Margaret Jacob has investigated the links between freemasonry and the Enlightenment. James Steven Curl has examined the influence of freemasonry on eighteenth-century art and architecture. Most recently, Peter Clark has produced a magisterial study placing freemasonry in the context of the development of clubs and societies as the major vehicles of social interaction in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. However, despite the appearance of these important studies, it still seems as if the surface of British masonic history has barely been scratched.

This is partly because the history of freemasonry is such a rich and diverse field that it is very difficult to develop a research programme that does justice to all the aspects of the subject. Just consider the extraordinary range of people who have been freemasons, from authors like Alexander Pope, Edmund Burke, Walter Scott, Robert Burns and Arthur Conan Doyle, and a varied array of statesmen including Washington, Garibaldi, Atatürk and Churchill, to musicians as diverse as Haydn, Sibelius and Duke Ellington, and actors from David Garrick to Peter Sellers.

Nor is the list an exclusively male one: the theosophist and social reformer Annie Besant, who you can see here in her masonic regalia, was active in promoting co-masonry, which admitted women, in Britain. Freemasonry would have meant different things to each of these people, and likewise each individual reflects a

different strand in masonic history. Such a diverse list of names emphasises the difficulty in assessing the cultural impact of freemasonry. For example, Sibelius's involvement in freemasonry is interesting not so much in respect of his music but more because he was a prominent Finnish nationalist, and freemasonry, despite its internationalist philosophy, has been closely connected with nationalist movements in Europe and America.

Freemasonry is intertwined with many prominent themes of British history over the past three hundred years. Through regimental lodges, freemasonry spread rapidly through the British Empire, and became, with organised sports and gothic architecture, one of the cultural forces which bound together the British Empire, as is apparent from this picture of a lodge in Lagos in 1900. Freemasonry is important in considering the relationship between the English and the Celtic nations in Britain. The way in which the Scottish contribution to the development of freemasonry has been underplayed by masonic historians provides a good illustration of Anglocentrism in social history. Many of the so-called Welsh national traditions, such as the druidic component of the eisteddfod, seem to have been influenced by masonic practice. The relationship between freemasonry and sectarianism in Scotland and Ireland seems evident, but has been little investigated. The organisational structure of freemasonry profoundly influenced friendly societies and trade unions, and until the First World War,

masonic symbols were often to be seen on trade union banners. At the other end of the social spectrum, freemasonry, with the school, college and club, became one of the bastions of male exclusivity in British society. Freemasonry is at the heart of much modern British social history, but its very diversity and all-pervasiveness makes it an elusive historical subject.

How can one come to terms with such a vast and sprawling subject? Spatial techniques of the kind that ECAI are pioneering are singularly appropriate to the study of freemasonry, since the symbolism of freemasonry is permeated with ideas of space. Indeed, freemasonry might be viewed at one level as a religion of geometry and space. Drawing on the craft lore developed by medieval masons, speculative masonry sees geometry as the queen of sciences. The symbolism of freemasonry is permeated by the geometrical tools familiar to the medieval mason – the dividers, the square, and the plumb line – as is apparent from these seal of freemason's lodges in Yorkshire. When the craft guilds began to admit members who were not actually masons, a process which eventually gave rise to modern freemasonry, they sought out those who possessed geometrical knowledge, such as military engineers and cartographers. Many famous early cartographers, such as the globemaker John Senex and John Pine, the engraver of Rocque's Map of London, were closely involved with freemasonry.

Ideas of space are also important in understanding masonic organisation. The lodge was originally the place where medieval masons lived while working on a particular building. The lodge system was devised to cope with the needs of an itinerant profession. The use of secret passwords was intended as a means by which travelling craftsmen could recognise each other. The lodge system in modern freemasonry has likewise proved attractive to those in travelling professions, who can be assured of a welcome by the local lodge wherever they are. For example, the travelling showmen who run fairgrounds found freemasonry a particularly useful way of making local contact. Showmen are still active in freemasonry, and the structure of the Showman's Guild is based on masonic forms. Similar features doubtless help explain the popularity of masonic forms of organisation as a structure for friendly societies and trade unions.

But before investigating the spatial structure of freemasonry, there is an essential preliminary - in J. M. Roberts's words, 'more counting'. As such, this represents a methodologically conventional response, but now of course the computer offers more than just rapid counting and sorting. Spatial analysis tools facilitate the investigation of the kind of complex cultural relationships which characterise the history of freemasonry and which are otherwise difficult to analyse.

Two kinds of database would provide the most useful starting points: one giving details of lodges and the other recording membership. This information is readily available. Lists of authorised lodges have been maintained by Grand Lodge since the earliest times. The engraver John Pine, a mason and friend of William Hogarth, produced a series of beautiful engraved lodge lists which are shown (in a very fanciful setting) here. In 1895, John Lane, a mason from Torquay, published the definitive edition of his *Masonic Records*, which used Pine's lists and other sources to provide a definitive record of the more than four thousand lodges which were then in existence. Lane itemises the date when the lodge was created, places where it met, and when lodges were disbanded. Listings of the five thousand or so lodges which have been created since 1895 are readily available in such publications as the *Masonic Year Book*.

The possibilities opened up by Lane's work are apparent from Peter Clark's recent book, which uses Lane to provide maps showing the distribution of masonic lodges in 1740, 1778 and 1800. These point to some interesting features about the growth of freemasonry at that time, such as the way in which it was very popular in south-west England and East Anglia but much less well regarded in the West Midlands. Clark also indicates how the rival grand lodge, known as the Ancients, thought to be less elitist, had a particular appeal in the industrial north.

Clark's maps whet the appetite for much more. His work ends in 1800 and, in order to understand how freemasonry bolstered social hierarchies in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it would be desirable to extend Clark's work into those centuries. The process by which freemasonry spread to Europe remains in many respects mysterious, and similar mapping would help clarify this issue. This kind of visualisation is often the only way to come to terms with the complex history of freemasonry abroad. For example, the cross-currents in Jamaica between Spanish, English, Scottish and French freemasonry, and its interconnection with revolutionary and nationalist movements in Latin and Central America, seem to cry out for the application of such a tool.

The main limitation of the three maps provided by Clark is that they are separated by gaps of more than twenty years. For some types of investigation, it is essential to examine changes in lodge distribution on a year by year basis. For example, it has been suggested that the French Revolution led to a growth in masonic lodges in Wales. Clark's maps suggest some growth in the number of Welsh masonic lodges between 1778 and 1800, but a year by year analysis is necessary to establish whether this might be related to events in France.

The most important facility electronic mapping would offer in analysing data such as this is the possibility of juxtaposition with other data. Thus, Margaret Jacob has pointed out that freemasons in Derbyshire sometimes

shared meeting places with radical and democratic groups at the time of the French Revolution. Comparative mapping of masonic meeting places and those of known radical groups would help establish whether this coincidence is important and, if so, whether it is apparent in other areas apart from Derbyshire. Likewise, the relationship between freemasonry and friendly societies has already been mentioned, and again comparative mapping provides a very effective way of investigating this relationship.

However, the value of a GIS package of lodges would go beyond analysis of issues such as these. It is an area where one would certainly want to develop the sort of bibliographical, image and other links of the sort that John Corrigan and Trevor Harris were describing yesterday. The bibliography of freemasonry is huge, but much of it is dross, and the difficulty of sorting the wheat from the chaff is one of the main difficulties facing the researcher into freemasonry. For social history, the most interesting material is local lodge histories. A GIS package linking lodge information to bibliographical information about the lodge, information about lodge records and perhaps even information about the survival of such artefacts as this masonic banner from Wigan would enable the researcher to come to terms with the complex cross-connections of masonic history at the same time both more evident and more manageable.

Although freemasonry is often - wrongly - seen as a secret society, ample data is available in the public domain on its membership. This important point has been grasped by amateur family historians but not generally by the professionals. Prior to 1799, lodges made occasional returns of membership to the Grand Lodge. From 1799 to 1967, under the Unlawful Societies Act, lodges were required to certify details of their membership, giving names, place of residence and occupation, to the clerk of the peace. These returns are generally preserved in county record offices. They provide a good basis for a compendious database of freemasons in Britain for the nineteenth and much of the twentieth centuries. Even at the very basic level of data given in the returns to the clerk of the peace, one could for example compare the social profile of lodges in different areas and explore how external events, such as the two world wars and the rise of anti-masonic movements, affected the membership of freemasonry.

In approaching the history of freemasonry, then, the use of spatial and temporal analysis tools potentially enables us not only to deal with large amounts of data but helps us come to terms with a subject which is extremely complex and wide-ranging in its cultural and social connections. Indeed, it may point the way towards new forms of historical synthesis. In the 1970s, interpretations of British social history were dominated by class: the formation of a working class consciousness at the time of the French Revolution, the alliance between the

aristocracy and the middle class at the time of the Reform Act, and the emergence of new forms of working class politics as a reaction to this. However, as historians have investigated other forms of social relationship and have emphasised that man (and woman) is not formed by economic relations alone, British social history has come to be seen as a welter of different forms of social relationship. Consequently a number of historians, such as David Cannadine, have complained that our view of modern social history has become effectively atomised, and have sought to develop new narratives to replace the old class-dominated view. But these new interpretations have failed to command a general consensus. Whether British social history is seen as driven primarily by class or by other forms of association, it is evident that freemasonry is of central importance. In making sense of freemasonry, it is clear that spatial and temporal visualisation tools can be enormously helpful. One wonders whether this holds true for British social history as a whole - that our understanding of social history has now burst beyond the confines of the history book and to create a new synthesis we need new visualisation tools of the sort that the projects in the Electronic Cultural Atlas Initiative are pioneering.

Freemasonry and Its Inheritance

Latest version of a talk delivered to various masonic groups

I should begin by introducing myself. I trained as a historian at the University of London, where I did a Ph.D. on the Peasants Revolt of 1381. I then got a job as a curator in the Department of Manuscripts of the British Library, where I worked for twenty years. I am very grateful to the British Library for allowing me to be seconded to the University of Sheffield for three years to undertake this work on the history of freemasonry. Among the jobs I undertook at the British Library was the planning of the move of the manuscripts from the British Museum building to the Library's splendid new premises at St Pancras. I was also extensively involved in planning for the application of the new digital technologies to the Library's work. Among my greatest privileges at the British Library was responsibility for the display of Magna Carta, and Magna Carta is actually is very good starting point for my remarks tonight.

The Library has two copies of the royal letter of 1215 by which King John announced the terms of Magna Carta. Unfortunately, one of these was burnt in a fire in 1731 and subsequent heavy-handed treatment means that it now looks like a piece of burnt toast. However, this burnt Magna Carta is the only one which still has the seal of

King John attached to it, so it is of some historical importance.

Displaying the burnt Magna Carta is difficult, since visitors eagerly making their way to the Library's exhibition galleries to see the founding document of English democracy are often bemused to find that one of the items on display looks as if it has been part of an over-enthusiastic Guy Fawkes celebration.

I had a bright idea to try and liven up the display. Shortly after the fire, a beautiful engraving of this burnt Magna Carta was made, showing the document while the damage was still relatively slight. I put a copy of the engraving in the case next to the burnt Magna Carta, to show what the fuss was all about.

The name of the artist who made this engraving was John Pine. He was one of the best English eighteenth-century engravers. He made some beautiful engravings of tapestries in the House of Lords showing the defeat of the Spanish Armada, which are among the most famous depictions of the Armada. He was a friend of William Hogarth, who painted his portrait. Together with the surveyor John Rocque, he produced a pioneering map of London, which provides a virtual A-Z of the Georgian city.

When I first visited the remarkable Library and Museum of Freemasonry at Freemasons' Hall in London, among

the treasures I was shown there were the charming eighteenth-century engraved lists of lodges, decorated with exquisite miniature engravings of the sign of the tavern where the lodge met. And who was the name of the engraver who produced most of these lists? Why, of course, it was John Pine. Pine was also responsible for engraving the famous frontispiece of the first edition of Anderson's Constitutions. He also undertook much other masonic work, including a remarkable scheme for engraving the quarterly communications.

Pine's engraved lists and masonic works are of course well known among freemasons. But in all the various accounts of Pine in art historical reference books, there is not a single mention of the engraved lists or Anderson. A very large part of Pine's output - the masonic one - has been completely overlooked by art historians. Moreover, although masonic scholars frequently refer to the engraved lists and to Pine, hardly any have ever mentioned Pine's other achievements as an artist.

This treatment of John Pine is very striking. It is almost as if he has been split into two different people - the accomplished historical and heraldic engraver, and the masonic artist - and the two John Pines seem to inhabit completely different worlds. The fact that art historians should be completely ignorant of some of the great artistic treasures of freemasonry is worrying enough - but neither art historians or masonic scholars can hope to

reach a proper understanding of John Pine unless they consider his work as a whole.

The archives at Great Queen Street include a series of documents known as returns. The name is misleading, since although a large proportion of the documents are indeed returns by lodges of their membership, the series also contains many letters to the Grand Secretary which are not specially concerned with membership. For example, the early returns for the Royal Augustus Lodge in Monmouth, which was consecrated as Lodge No. 656 in 1815, include a lengthy correspondence concerning a tumultuous row which erupted there in 1821.

The leading light of the lodge was a local solicitor, Trevor Philpotts, who served as Master for long periods up to his death in 1849, and subsidised the lodge from his own pocket, paying for furniture and even sometimes helping members with their registration fees. In 1821, there was a disciplinary inquiry into the behaviour of one member of the lodge, Joseph Price, who was a local justice of the peace. A series of resolutions condemning Price were passed by a committee of the lodge and communicated in print. One of these resolutions referred to actions by Price as a justice of the peace.

Price immediately wrote to Grand Lodge, enclosing copies of the documents. These were laid before the

Duke of Sussex, who, in the words of the Grand Secretaries (there were two in those days) 'viewing with deep concern the impropriety, as well as the unmasonic conduct of the officers and members of the Royal Augustus Lodge, has thought fit to direct that the said Lodge shall be suspended for the present'. The Board of General Purposes was ordered to undertake an enquiry.

Philpotts wrote furiously to the Grand Secretaries, demanding the names and addresses of the members of the Board of General Purposes, and declaring that he was at a loss to know what else could have been done, given the seriousness of the charges. Philpotts was particularly worried because a lodge was shortly to be consecrated at Newport, and he was anxious that the Royal Augustus should attend as a lodge rather than as individuals.

Eventually, Philpott wrote with his wardens to express their contrition that they 'were led by inadvertence to allude to any individual in his public capacity as a magistrate'. The Duke of Sussex accepted the apology, expressed his pleasure that Philpotts and the Wardens had recognised the need to behave more circumspectly in future and, assuring them of his concern to act leniently, lifted the suspension of the lodge.

What happened next is described in a letter from Philpotts: 'On receiving your official letter I sent to inform the officers of the lodge of the circumstance...The information spread over the town immediately, and in the

course of the evening some persons wholly unconnected with the lodge and masonry, ordered the ringers to ring the church bells. Immediately on learning what was intended I sent the tyler to forbid any ringing or any other demonstration of public feeling whatever...and he accordingly did so, and started it was the particular wish and request of the whole lodge that no ringing should take place...The reply was that they had nothing to do with the lodge, but were ordered to ring by some of the principal inhabitants of the town, and would go on. I then went to some of the principal inhabitants of the town and begged they would interfere to prevent it and they did so by my particular request.'

Price then wrote to Grand Lodge to complain that he had only heard about the Grand Master's decision on his case through the ringing of the church bells. Philpotts was petrified that the lodge would again be suspended. The Grand Master decided, however, that it would be unfair to penalise the lodge for the actions of the ringers. Eventually, Price requested the return of the incriminating documents, an action which The Grand Master welcomed as an expression of masonic good feeling, but which unfortunately deprives the historian of a copy of the resolutions.

As it appears in the documents among the returns at Great Queen Street, this is a good story, but seems simply to be one of those ferocious disputes about nothing which frequently engulf any club or society in a

small town (there's a strong flavour of Warmington-upon-Sea about it, I think). It is only when we turn to the town archives at Monmouth that we find out what this dispute was really about. Like many other towns at that time, Monmouth was ruled by a small group of favourites of the local big-wig, the Duke of Beaufort. Almost all the important posts in the town were held by half a dozen people in rotation. The rest of the inhabitants, no matter how wealthy or well-to-do, had no say in the government of the town. In 1818, a lawsuit was brought to try and allow all burgesses a say in the election of the mayor. This lawsuit led to such controversy that, in the words of the historian of Monmouth, Keith Kissack, 'Monmouth became a byword for political violence and ill-will'.

Trevor Philpotts, the beleaguered Master of the Royal Augustus Lodge, was the leader of the party demanding reform. Joseph Price was one of the most belligerent members of the group opposed to reform. Price was a very colourful character, the father of 24 children and a compulsive litigant (sometimes against his own children).

The particular incident which seems to have prompted the uproar in the Royal Augustus lodge was an attempt by Philpott to have Price summoned before the quarter sessions. He claimed that Price had used his influence as a magistrate to make life easier for one of his friends imprisoned in the county gaol, allowing his friend to

entertain visitors in the gaol until late at night and arranging for fine wine and food to be delivered to him in the prison.

What is the lesson of all this? We can only understand the letters in the archives at Great Queen Street if we investigate the wider history of Monmouth at that time. If we just considered the letters at Great Queen Street on their own, we would have no idea what the dispute was really about. On the other hand, the information in masonic archives adds considerably to our understanding of the struggle for greater local democracy in Monmouth at that time. As with John Pine, there is (or should be) a two-way traffic. Historians can help masons understand their own history; masons can provide historians with new information about the events which they study. Freemasonry has a great deal to interest the historian because it has a remarkable heritage of archives, books and artefacts which has been little explored by historians. And historians have a lot to offer freemasons because they can help freemasons in better appreciating and understanding their remarkable inheritance. One of the interesting things about freemasonry to me is that, from its earliest appearance, freemasonry has had a strong sense of engagement with the past. I think that is important and interesting, and is something academic historians should welcome and support.

More than thirty years ago the famous Oxford historian, John M. Roberts, published in the most prestigious

English professional historical journal, the *English Historical Review*, an article called 'Freemasonry: the Possibilities of a Neglected Topic'. It is an inspiring rallying cry. Roberts stressed that, despite the fact that freemasonry is one of the social movements of British origin which has had the biggest international impact, it has been largely ignored by professional historians in Britain. This contrasts with, say, France, Spain and Holland, where freemasonry has been the subject of elaborate scholarly investigation. Although there have been some important scholarly works on freemasonry in Britain published since Roberts wrote, the study of freemasonry is nevertheless still seen by many British historians as a marginal subject, and its many historical connections remain largely unexplored.

The neglect of freemasonry by British historians is succinctly illustrated by looking at one famous historical reference work, the *Victoria History of the Counties of England*, known popularly as the VCH. This is one of the most remarkable historical enterprises ever undertaken. It aims to produce a fully documented history by a professional historian of every parish in England. It began in 1900 and is still in progress, having now published over 220 volumes. Middlesex is one of the counties for which work on the VCH is currently in progress. Among the information the VCH tends fairly systematically to record are details of local clubs and societies. However, among these 220 volumes, which are the first port of call for scholars seeking information

about English local life, there are just a handful of references to freemasonry. Reference to freemasonry in Middlesex, for example, is restricted to mention of the hoary old legend that Wren initiated William III while he was working at Hampton Court. Otherwise, freemasonry is forgotten. It is as if freemasonry in Middlesex barely exists. By contrast, details of the establishment of friendly societies are fairly systematically recorded. Lane's *Masonic Records*, which would enable VCH researchers easily to give a short account of the early history of freemasonry in each of the places covered, is not cited at all in the entire 220 volumes.

The aim of the new Centre for Research into Freemasonry at Sheffield is, quite simply, to change this situation, and to put the study of freemasonry firmly on the academic map in Britain. How can this be done?

The first and most urgent requirement is to provide information about what work has already been done. If the VCH researchers had known about Lane, they would certainly have used it. They simply did not know of its existence. Even very experienced researchers are astonished when you tell them that there is a remarkable library at Great Queen Street which is freely available to academic researchers. So I think the most important requirement is the provision of detailed annotated bibliographies and guide to research resources to tell scholars what is out there.

There are already some useful bibliographies available - Matthew Scanlan has recently produced for the Cornerstone Society a useful introductory bibliography, but it is quite short and is directed primarily at helping masons improve their own understanding of the craft. Scholars want something different. We are currently mounting on the Centre's web site an introductory bibliography of English language works on the history of freemasonry which lists about 150 books and articles and gives short summaries of them. This bibliography will be followed by other resources, such as a list of provincial histories, linked to a searchable version of Lane.

The Centre is organising an active lecture and seminar programme at Sheffield, and we are organising a major academic conference at Sheffield in July. The seminar programme is open to everybody, and anyone here who is interested in the seminars will be very welcome. Details of the programme appear in *Freemasonry Today* and on the Centre's web site.

I'm also contributing to academic seminars and conferences elsewhere. I gave a presentation to a big international conference at the British Library, and the uniform enthusiasm of the scholars there for the fascinating historical material held by masons was very striking.

Universities are interested in research, illustrating the importance of the material that is out there. A wide range

of papers and notes are already available on the Centre's web site, and these will gradually lead to publications in major academic journals.

The Centre is producing a series of CD ROMs helping to make more widely available key texts in freemasonry. The first such CD ROM, William Preston's *Illustrations of Masonry*, has just been published, and we will be following this up with CDs of Gould and of early Books of Constitutions. We also hope to develop larger projects for on-line access, such as a searchable version of *The Freemason*.

You'll notice that I've not mentioned teaching very much, and I fear that many masons imagined that I would have lots of students who I would be teaching all about freemasonry. However, what we are establishing is a research centre - increasingly, universities are relying on centres of this kind to carry out the most innovative and intensive research, and that is how the Centre for Research into Freemasonry is envisaged. The Centre has been funded in the first instance for three years by United Grand Lodge, Yorkshire West Riding province and Lord Northampton, and during this first three years the focus is very much on exploring the research materials that are available and on developing the research agenda. That said, we are enrolling a few postgraduate students in the History Department.

The Board of General Purposes has indicated that it is committed to providing longer-term funding for the Centre, and that is when I hope we will be able to develop our teaching activities. If we can sort out all the bureaucratic and financial issues, my hope would be that within four years or so we will be able to offer courses of various types on the history of freemasonry which will lead to diploma qualifications. Ideally, I would like eventually to develop an M.A. in the area, but that is still some way down the path.

Nevertheless, I've have been doing some teaching in the university, and there's one project I've recently been involved with which has a particular Sheffield interest. As you'll know, Sheffield has one of the best Schools of Architecture in the country. As part of their second year project, students are assigned a building in the city for which they prepare a detailed study, making drawings, elevations and models. The students then produce imaginary projects for new uses for the building, for which again they prepare drawings and models. One of the lecturers in architecture was very struck by the former Sheffield masonic hall in Surrey Street, now the Surrey and Fringe pub, which he thought was an interesting building, and selected this building as the focus for the second year projects this year. He asked me if I would contribute to the course, by giving talks about masonic symbolism (not an easy choice). I was able to point the students towards helpful books such as James

Steven Curl's book on Masonic Art and Architecture and John Hamill and Bob Gilbert's *World Freemasonry*.

This is, I think, a unique experiment, since I think few discussions are held with large groups of nineteen year olds about freemasonry. I started by asking them what they thought freemasonry was. The striking thing was not that there was any antagonism or misinformation in their answers, but rather that it was something that generally they simply had not come across before. The most common answer was that it was a business man's club. Curiously, secrecy did not figure very prominently in the answers. I spent two hours trying to explain what freemasonry is and what the function of a masonic hall is. I tried to hammer home the idea that freemasonry is an organisation which retains the use of ritual and that it seeks to impart moral lessons through the use of ritual and symbolism. The video produced by West Riding province was very helpful in this respect.

A few months later, I went to see a display of the students work. Diane Clements, the Director of the Library and Museum of Freemasonry, came to join me. I think she was a little doubtful as to what she would find, but she was, I think, very impressed. The various proposals prepared by the students for the Surrey Street building were all extremely varied and thoughtful. There were proposals for a masonic museum and library, for a masonic roof garden, for a masonic symbol incorporating ideas of the orders of architecture, even a gradual

deconstruction of the building. In developing the work, some of the students had done some archival research, and had found some plans for the extension of the building in 1913 in the city archives. What struck me was how many of the students had engaged quite deeply with the ideas and symbols of freemasonry. There wasn't any suggestion that any of them would be becoming masons when they turned 21 – but certainly they are now better informed about freemasonry.

We have arranged for work from the Surrey Street project, as we have called it, to be on display at Great Queen Street during the 'Freemasonry in the Community' week later this year. The models and drawings will be displayed in the vestibule outside the Grand Temple in Freemasons' Hall. I'll also be contributing some panels on the history of the Surrey Street building, and we'll be including some pictures of some of the mementos from Surrey Street here at Tapton on the panels. The process of exhibiting at Great Queen Street will further extend the students' contact with and understanding of freemasonry. The mounting of the exhibition will mean that the students have to visit Great Queen Street – which I hope as architects will be of interest to them – and we will throw a reception there which will enable them to show some of their work to potential employers, and will further increase the range of involvement in the Surrey Street project. When the display is finished at Great Queen Street, I hope it will be

possible to show some of the work here at Tapton Hall. I'd also like to put something on the Centre's web site.

This is a small but I think interesting example of what can be done. There are of course many other areas of contact and cross-fertilisation which the Centre potentially opens up. One area that particularly interests me is the lodge history. Professional historians are now very aware of family history and local history as the main areas of amateur historical work. But it seems to me that masonic history is the third great area of amateur history, and it is one most historians are completely unaware of. Nowadays, there is a lot of professional support and resources for family and local history, but there is very little of that kind for the mason writing say a lodge history. It seems to me that there is a lot of scope here, and I hope it will form a focus of any courses we get going.

The new Centre has the most enormous potential, but research is a slow business and it will not be possible to achieve everything overnight. The ideal I have in my mind's eye is the remarkable Centre established by Professor Jose Ferrer Benimeli at the University of Saragossa. This has produced a stream of books, has over a hundred associated scholars, many postgraduate students, and regularly holds large-scale international conferences. But the development of this Centre has been a lifetime's work for Professor Benemili, and there is no

reason to think that at Sheffield we can push ahead any more quickly than he has managed.

When in 1888, Henry Sadler, the first Librarian and Curator at United Grand Lodge, published his *Masonic Facts and Fictions*, one of the first readers was George Markham Twedell, the author of *A Hundred Masonic Sonnets*. Not surprisingly, Twedell felt moved to burst into verse, and I am grateful (or at least I think I'm grateful) to Rebecca Coombes for drawing my attention to Twedell's outpourings on this occasion:

Souls of the "Ancient Masons" who did keep
The Good Old Craft in England far more pure
Than "Moderns" would have made it, I am sure,
E'en now, in bliss, with gratitude must leap
To see a worthy Brother rise to sweep
The cobwebs of delusion from the page.
Where they have hung, dirt-catching, black with age;
For thy researches have been carried deep
Into such records as do now remain.
Thanks, Bro. SADLER, hearty thanks to thee,
For thy wise labours in Freemasonry;
Thou now hast made what erst was dark most plain.
"Masonic Facts and Fictions" well have shown
How seeds which germinated were by "Ancient Masons"
sown.

If the work of the new Centre at Sheffield ever inspires
the muse of a twenty-first century Twedell, then I will
know that we have been successful.

Appendix

References to Freemasonry in the *Victoria History of the Counties of England*

The VCH, as it is popular known, is a comprehensive work of reference for English local history. Begun in 1899, it has now published over 220 volumes and is still in progress. County sets completed are: Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hampshire, Hertfordshire, Huntingdonshire, Lancashire, Rutland, Surrey, Warwickshire, Worcestershire, Yorkshire (general chapters), Yorkshire (North Riding), Yorkshire (City of York). Counties begun but not currently in progress are: Cornwall, Cumberland, Derbyshire, Devon, Dorset, Herefordshire, Kent, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, London, Norfolk, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire, Suffolk, Yorkshire (West Riding). Counties currently in progress are: Cambridgeshire, Cheshire, Durham, Essex, Gloucestershire, Middlesex, Oxfordshire, Shropshire, Somerset, Staffordshire, Sussex, Wiltshire, Yorkshire (East Riding). Only two counties have no VCH coverage, Northumberland and Westmorland.

The topographical sections of each of the county histories will give, when the VCH is complete, a fully referenced history of every city, town and parish in England, the topics covered including landscape, settlement, population, buildings, ownership of the land, agriculture, trade and industry, local government, the parish church and schools. In early volumes, coverage of

local clubs and societies in topographical articles is patchy, but in more recent volumes, friendly societies, local literary societies and sports clubs are more consistently noted. One of the most striking expressions of the relative neglect of the history of freemasonry by English professional historians is the sparse and intermittent nature of references to freemasons within the VCH. The following list is based on published indexes, but in case references to local lodges were concealed under placename headings, the complete index was checked for about a third of published volumes (which did not pick up any stray references to local lodges).

VCH Essex: Essex is the only VCH county with a separate bibliography volume. This includes a separate heading for freemasons under 'Societies', and lists: Essex Provincial Grand Lodge, Calendar and Directory, 1922, 1927-35; Essex Provincial Grand Lodge, Annual Meeting, 1924 (in Essex Record Office); Essex Provincial Grand Lodge, 150th Anniversary Meeting, 1926 (in Ilford Borough Library).

VCH Middlesex

Vol.II, p. 360 (history of Hampton, published 1911): 'In 1695 Sir Christopher Wren, who had become Grand Master of the Freemasons, initiated William III into the mysteries of the order, and the King often presided over a lodge at Hampton Court during the completion of the building' (cites Larousse, *Grand Dictionnaire Universel*

du xix^e Siècle, viii, p. 765)

Vol. X, pp. 70-1 (history of Hackney, published 1995): [in discussing philanthropy in Hackney] 'Many mid 19th-century benevolent societies were branches of such national organisations as the Ancient Order of Foresters and, from 1861, the Freemasons [cites Middlesex Clerk of the Peace records]

VCH Oxfordshire

Vol. X, pp. 16-7 (history of Banbury, published 1972): 'Banbury was the first town in Oxfordshire after Oxford itself to have a Freemason's Lodge. The Lodge (No. 181) was started in 1740 and continued until 1768. In 1794 another Lodge (No. 172) moved from Chipping Norton to Banbury, where it met at the Cock Inn until 1813. It was revived in 1815 and continued until 1828. The first of Banbury's surviving lodges, Cherwell Lodge, was founded in 1852 to meet at the 'Red Lion'. In 1882 the Provincial Grand Lodge held its annual meeting in Banbury, and its members took part in laying the foundation stone of the Masonic Hall. Five years later the Cherwell Chapter of Royal Arch Masons was formed in Banbury. Three more lodges and one Mark lodge have been founded during the 20th century' [cites A. J. Kerry, *Hist. Of Freemasonry in Oxon*]

Vol. XII, pp. 332, 416 (history of Woodstock, published 1990): 'In 1922 the Empire cinema was opened at no. 41

Oxford Street, which had been a Wesleyan chapel until 1907 and thereafter the Freemasons' Hall'.

VCH Shropshire

Vol. X, pp. 86-7 (history of Church Stretton, published 1998): [Following account of local friendly societies] 'Freemasons' lodges were formed in 1926 (at the Longmynd Hotel) and 1946. In 1973 the lodges moved from the Denehurst Hotel to a newly purchased building (the old Queen's Head) in High Street, officially opened as a masonic hall in 1975' [cites H. Temperton, *Hist. of Craft Freemasonry in Salop and Stretton Focus*]

VCH Staffordshire

Vol. VI, p. 180 (general chapter on education in Staffordshire, published 1979): [Royal Wolverhampton School]: 'From the late 19th century the Freemasons acquired increasing influence over the school. St Peter's Lodge, Wolverhampton, had become a subscriber by 1863, but by 1875 only four lodges, all local, were as yet subscribing. In the early 1890s, however, Warwickshire and Worcestershire lodges began to subscribe. In 1893 the Provincial Grand Lodge of Staffordshire made a donation, and the lodge was held at the school in 1894 for the laying of the foundation-stone of the chapel. There were 24 lodges subscribing by 1899, and 233 by 1934. In the earlier 20th century most of the governors were Masons and many of the pupils were Masons'

children.'

Vol. VI, p. 254 (general chapter on Protestant nonconformity, published 1979): notes that a New Connexion chapel in Stafford was closed in 1952 and reopened as a masonic temple in 1953.'

Vol. VII, p. 43 (history of Longnor, published in 1996): 'There were four friendly societies in Longnor in 1803, with a total membership of 238. A Freemasons' Lodge of Unity established in 1811 had 25 members in 1813, but only seven lived in Longnor itself; the rest came from neighbouring places, including Tissington (Derb.) The lodge was dissolved in 1829. A later lodge was dissolved in 1866. A Women's Institute was established in 1920.' [cites Staffordshire quarter session records, F. W. Willmore, *Hist. of Freemasonry in Province of Staffs*, and *Transactions of North Staffordshire Naturalists Field Club*, xlii, p. 196]

Vol. VII, p. 151 (history of Leek, published in 1996. Has a separate section for Freemasons): FREEMASONS. In 1992 Leek had two lodges of Freemasons, St Edward's formed in 1863 and Dieu-la-cresse formed in 1920. In 1926 the Congregational manse in King Street was converted into a masonic hall, which was extended in 1933 and was still used in 1992.' [cites *Staffs Advertiser*, 1863, and information from Provincial Grand Lodge of Staffs, and Secretary of St Edward's Lodge.

Vol. XIV, p. 167 (history of Lichfield, published in 1990. Has a separate section for Freemasons and Friendly Societies): 'An Ancient Lodge of Freemasons was established at the Scales inn in 1784 and still met in 1813. A Lodge of Moderns was formed in 1787 at the Three Crowns inn in Breadmarket Street and still met c. 1809. In the earlier 1830s the Three Crowns was the meeting place of St John's Lodge, closed in 1850 but revived in 1865. In the later 1970s the lodge removed to Tamworth, where it still met in the late 1980s. The Elias Ashmole Lodge was established in 1972; it too met at Tamworth in the late 1980s.' [cites F. Willmore, *op. cit.*, Kelly's Directory, and information from the Provincial Grand Lodge of Staffs]

VCH Wiltshire

Vol. IV, pp. 389-90: [This is one of the 'general volumes' of the VCH, published in 1959. It contains chapters on the economic and agrarian history of Wiltshire, transport, sport, spas and royal forests. It is the only one of the general volumes of the VCH to include a separate section on the history of freemasonry in the county. It is based on F. H. Goldney, *History of Freemasonry in Wilts*, for events up to 1879, and thence on the *Wilts Masonic Calendar* and information from the Librarian of Grand Lodge. A very useful table of lodges in the province (covering craft lodges, royal arch chapters, Mark Master lodges and Royal Ark Mariners, and Preceptory of the Orders of the Temple and Knights

of St John) is provided. A copy of this chapter is appended. It would be extremely helpful if future general volumes of the VCH could emulate this example.]

Vol. XII, pp. 204-5 (history of Marlborough, published in 1983): 'A masonic lodge which met in 1768 at the Castle inn had been dissolved by 1777. A Wiltshire Militia lodge met from 1803 to 1805, became permanent when the regimental headquarters of the Wiltshire Militia were established at Marlborough in 1818, and took the name Lodge of Loyalty. It was dissolved in 1834. Marlborough Lodge of Unity, renamed Lodge of Loyalty, was formed in 1875 and since 1911 or earlier has met at the Masonic Hall, Oxford Street. The Methuen Chapter of Royal Arch masons, formed in 1883, the St Peter and St Paul Preceptory of Masonic Knights Templar, formed in 1962, and the Lodge of Good Fellowship, formed in 1971, also met there in 1982'. [ex info. J. Hamill, Librarian and Curator, Freemasons' Hall]

Vol. XIV, pp. 136-7 (history of Malmesbury, published in 1991): 'The masonic lodge of St Aldhelm met in Malmesbury from 1901 and in 1906 the Royal Arch Chapter of St Aldhelm was formed' (cites *VCH Wilts*, iv, 389).

Vol. XV, p. 123 (history of Ludgershall, published in 1995): 'A craft lodge, 'Border', for freemasons, was formed in the Prince of Wales [an inn] in 1905 and still met there in 1990.'

VCH Yorkshire

City of York (published in 1961), p. 439: notes bequest by Sir J. S. Rymer to masonic charities, 1923; p. 457 n. notes that the St Saviourgate Hall was later used as a Masonic Lodge; p. 418, notes that 7 Little Blake Street, probably formerly used as a Roman catholic priest-house in the late 17th and early 18th centuries, was purchased by the York Union Lodge of Freemasons in 1806.

East Riding vol. VI (Beverley, published in 1989), p. 112, notes that the Tiger Inn 'was the meeting place of a freemasons' lodge established in 1793 and of a hunt club formed in 1808'; p. 151 notes that 'The long established local lodge of freemasons acquired the former dispensary in Register Square for its hall in 1886 [cites *Beverley Guardian*]; p. 249, notes that the methodist chapel in Trinity Lane was closed in 1926 and sold to the freemasons, who used it in 1987' [cites *Beverley Guardian* and *VCH Yorks ER*, I, 317]

Researching Freemasonry

Extracts from talk to Humber Lodge of Installed

Masters, October 2002

The 1820s has been described as the darkest time in the history of freemasonry in Hull, but it is precisely such stormy periods which interest the historian. The central figure in Hull freemasonry at that time is a name that is I am sure familiar to you, that of William Crow, a lieutenant in the Royal Navy, who joined Minerva lodge No. 250 in 1819 and became Senior Deacon the following year. Crow quickly demonstrated his abilities when the Treasurer of the lodge left Hull taking the lodge accounts with him. Crow ensured that they were returned, and sorted out the mess left behind by the Treasurer. He became the Master of Minerva lodge in 1823.

The Humber Lodge No. 57 had been suffering financial difficulties for some years. When the lodge was invited to the lodge of reconciliation at the time of the union, it replied that the officers could not afford to travel to London. By 1821, the lodge had virtually ceased functioning. The former master, Thomas Stoddard, had been expelled from freemasonry, but retained all correspondence of the lodge, so that membership fees disappeared. The warrant, jewels and clothing of the lodge had been kept by the Treasurer who refused to give

them up. According to the reminiscences recorded by Coltman Smith, when summoned to a meeting at the Black Swan in Dock Street to discuss these matters, the Treasurer left the warrant downstairs with the landlady, with strict instructions not to give it to anyone without his permission. Nevertheless, the Master of the Lodge tricked the landlady into giving him the warrant which he hid in an empty house. The Treasurer protested to the Provincial Grand Master, who suspended the warrant.

Crow had acquired a reputation as a trouble shooter, and was one of the arbitrators appointed to sort out the problems of Humber lodge. By 1824, matters had been resolved, but the Humber was still very sickly. The Master, Joseph Ridsdale wrote to Great Queen Street apologising that 'the fewness of our members, the lowness of our finances, and the absence of those who have not yet returned, may all have contributed to the appearance of errors in our accounts'. However, by the end of 1825, the membership of Humber had doubled, with twelve members joining from Minerva, led by Crow, the first to join in October 1824. In 1825, Crow became Master of the Humber lodge. What were the reasons for this secession? According to Coltman Smith, the split was connected with the heavy debts of the Minerva lodge and there seems no reason to doubt this. The reasons for these financial problems are not clear: Coltman Smith suggests that the funds were depleted by an excess of hospitality, but, in the very poor economic climate at that time, the lodge probably also had many

demands to relieve impoverished brethren. The cost of maintaining the Minerva's own premises at Dagger Lane may also have been a factor. In 1826-7 a further nineteen members of Minerva joined Humber lodge.

The new members of Humber lodge had great ambitions. In 1826, the Humber petitioned for the establishment of a Royal Arch chapter attached to the lodge, but the petition ran into difficulties because there was no record that the proposed First Principal, Thomas Feetam, a cabinet maker who was another of those who had joined Humber from Minerva, had ever been exalted to the Royal Arch. The bye-laws were revised and an attempt was made to establish a formal fund of benevolence. In March 1827, a proposal was made to build a masonic hall for use by both the Humber and Minerva lodges, but this fell through. Nevertheless, Humber pushed ahead with building a hall.

What happened next is described in a letter from the Deputy Provincial Grand Master, Richard Beverley, to the Grand Secretary, which I will quote. 'The Humber Lodge of Hull, has lately come to the determination to build a new lodge on a grand scale - which they have begun, and have already advanced considerably. The landlord of the inn where they lately held their meetings (the Turks Head) of course feels that he will be a loser by the lodge leaving his house: to prevent therefore their meeting in a new lodge or going on with the building, he, at the last time they met at his house, posted constables at

the door to take the Masters and Wardens into custody and to arrest from them by violence the warrant.' Coltman Smith recorded a tradition that the Master, who was Thomas Feetam, had the warrant specially strengthened with canvas, and wore it instead of an apron so that it could not be seized.

Beverley continued as follows: The Master was accordingly arrested [by the constables posted outside the inn], and the lodge broke up in a great riot, though the Master was shortly released from custody and got off safely with the warrant.... The Humber lodge now meets at some other public house till their new Lodge is finished; but the Landlord of the old inn vexed at what has happened, has persuaded three other members (the most prominent of whom is one Brother Roach) uniformly to blackball all persons that may be proposed either for initiation or admission from other lodges, so as to prevent the Humber lodge ever having any new members, and so of course finally to make it dissolve. One of these four brothers openly professed his determination to blackball every person that should be proposed, and they began their conspiracy by excluding some most unexceptionable persons of the best character, who would have been a valuable addition to any lodge.'

All this was bad enough, but it was not the main reason for Beverley writing to Great Queen Street. The Humber lodge had excluded the four blackballers and Beverley had approved the lodge's actions. However, Roach, a

mariner who had been one of those who had joined Humber from Minerva lodge with Crow, had decided to take revenge. Beverley described how Roach 'takes about with him Carlisle's publications on masonry, lends them to people, not masons, to read, and assures them all the secrets of masonry are there fully and completely exposed - & that any body purchasing Carlisle's book may know the whole secret for 2s 9d'. Beverley was outraged at what he considered complete perjury, and asked the Grand Secretary for guidance about how Roach could be punished.

Who was Carlisle, and what were these publications which Roach was showing to non-masons? Richard Carlile was a radical atheist writer and publisher who was one of the pioneers of freedom of speech in Britain. A tin-plate worker from Devon, he drifted into radical activity in London after 1815. He became a journalist and pamphleteer, and was captivated by the works of Thomas Paine. He began printing cheap editions of Paine's work. When he produced a cheap edition of Paine's critique of christianity, *The Age of Reason*, Carlile was sent to Dorchester gaol. From his prison room, Carlile organised an extraordinary campaign against the ban on Paine's book, enlisting dozens of volunteers who risked trial and imprisonment by selling Carlile's publications. Carlile wore out the judicial system, and eventually the government gave up trying to suppress Paine's book.

While in Dorchester, Carlile also published a periodical called *The Republican*, which became the most widely read working class journal. Carlile championed many other progressive causes, such as birth control and vegetarianism, and is increasingly seen by scholars as a pivotal figure in the history of English social thought. In 1825, Carlile devoted virtually a whole volume of *The Republican* to publishing a great deal of masonic ritual. He saw this as an important part of his campaign against secrecy. Carlile was the first to print the post-union ritual, and his book provides the earliest evidence for the ritual of many additional degrees. It was this book which Roach was passing around Hull. Carlile's interest in freemasonry is important in understanding the later development of his thought. Influenced by Paine and others, he came to the conclusion that freemasonry embodied metaphorical truths about religion, predating the distortions which he thought that christianity had introduced. He reprinted his volume as a *Manual of Freemasonry*, which became one of his most widely circulated works.

In considering a figure like Carlile, evidence of the extent to which his publications were read and circulated is very important, and the letter describing Roach's behaviour in Hull provides important evidence that, just two years after its publication, Carlile's exposure was widely known and circulated. We know very little about the reaction of Grand Lodge to Carlile's work. For this reason, the reply by Edward Harper as Grand Secretary

to Beverley's letter is very significant. Harper expressed his abhorrence of Roach's 'base and scandalous' conduct, but his main concern was to ensure that Carlile did not hear of the incident.. For this reason, he felt no official action was possible. Formal action by Grand Lodge would, declared Harper, be gratifying to Carlile, since 'it would be the means of giving publicity to the thing he has published and thereby be the cause of its being more generally known and consequently circulated and read'. He urged a policy of 'silent contempt'. In order to keep the affair quiet, Harper had not even dared to raise it with 'the public authorities of Grand Lodge' but had quietly discussed it with other Grand Officers, who concurred with his advice.

This incident at Humber Lodge thus reveals some interesting and unexpected information about a significant figure in England history. There is a great deal more I could add about the historical themes raised by this dispute at Hull. The disputes continued after 1827, and the blackballing activities were taken up by other members of the lodge. Protests by the Phoenix lodge against the exclusions of blackballers drew Beverley back into the dispute, and led to a row between him and Phoenix lodge. One of the factors in these disputes appears to have been about the building of masonic halls. At this time masonic halls were still a rarity; but Hull had three. This seems to me to say a great deal about the aspirations of Hull as a city, and is a fact historians of the city should investigate further. I think

this provides more than enough illustration of how a single incident in a masonic lodges in a town such as Hull has a great deal to interest the historian.

Let me conclude by introducing you to a Victorian mason much revered in Hull but now perhaps completely forgotten, George Markham Tweddell. Tweddell was born at Stokesley in Cleveland in 1821 and became an apprentice to a local printer William Braithwaite. At the age of 19, Tweddell became editor of a new local newspaper published by Braithwaite, but his articles in support of the working man were so controversial that Braithwaite sacked him. Tweddell was able to continue publishing the paper on his own account, and became an all-purpose writer and publisher. He married Florence Shaw, who, as Florence Cleveland was one of the best known Yorkshire dialect poets. During the 1850s, Tweddell and his wife were Master and Matron of the Bury Industrial and Ragged Schools in Lancashire. Tweddell's literary output was enormous. He was most celebrated for his book on Shakespeare and His Contemporaries. He was a regular contributor to both The Freemasons' Magazine and The Freemason. He was also an enthusiastic oddfellow, publishing an oddfellow's reciter. By 1877, Tweddell had run into financial difficulties, and William Andrews, a popular historian and freemason who lived in Hull, arranged a subscription to present Tweddell with a 'purse of gold'. Tweddell was very interested in chartist politics, and he was one of a

number of masons in northern England involved in the campaign to secure the vote for working people.

Tweddell was also a rather bad poet, but nevertheless he was included by Andrews in a collection of modern Yorkshire poets. Tweddell's first published collection of poetry was 'A Hundred Masonic Sonnets Illustrative of the Principles of the Craft for Freemasons and Non-Masons'. In the introduction, Tweddell described how he had lost the sight of one eye. When he was forced to rest his eye, he often spent the time composing a sonnet. Tweddell's sonnets cover such unlikely subjects as the masonic press, politics and freemasonry, masonic jewellery, and promotion by merit - all matters still close to heart of freemasons. Since I spend much of my time in the library at Great Queen Street, and everything I've talked about tonight is drawn from the remarkable collections there, I can't resist giving you Tweddell's first sonnet on lodge libraries. (There are three altogether, you may be alarmed to hear, but I'll spare you all three).

I would that every Masons' Lodge should have
A library of good Masonic lore.
The Arts and Sciences we should explore,
And all that's calculated Man to save
From ignorance and vice. Mere sign and word
Were never masonry: they help to guard
The Craft from cowans; but the great reward
Is his who fights with Masonry's keen sword
To slaughter error. Men have labour'd hard

Age after age, to chronicle each thought
They felt was worthy; and all Masons ought
To cherish and to spread them, and to guard
Them from destruction. Thus a choice Library,
By all good Masons, ever must well-treasured be.

Why Research the Royal Arch?

*Paper presented to the symposium on the Royal Arch
organised by the Lodge Hope of Kurrachee No. 337 at
Kirkcaldy, November 2003*

The Centre which I run at Sheffield University has an advisory committee consisting of distinguished academics, whose responsibility is to ensure that the work of the Centre is of a suitable academic standard. The Chairman of the Committee is an eminent historian from the University of Sheffield, who specialises in medieval philosophy. The Chairman has no previous background in the study of freemasonry, but has taken a very keen interest in the work of the Centre and has been very game in coping with the arcane discussions which inevitably occur when we are discussing the history of freemasonry. However, one day I realised I had gone too far. We were discussing the history of freemasonry, and I mentioned the Royal Arch. The Chairman was completely baffled and was evidently finally defeated by this esoteric terminology. 'What on earth', he said, 'is the Royal Arch?'. I did my best briefly to explain, but I think failed to reassure him and I suspect he decided that my brain had finally been addled by excessive exposure to freemasons.

This story reflects the difficulties of trying to encourage the study of freemasonry at a university, but it also

illustrates a more important point. Historians and other academics investigating freemasonry assume that it has a very simple structure. They think of it as being like a church or a large social club. There is a national organising committee and a number of local branches. You are either a member of freemasonry or not. The famous British social historian Peter Clark a few years ago published a book looking at the history of clubs and societies in Britain in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Professor Clark argued that one of the chief features of British society at that time was the great popularity of clubs and societies of all types. He used freemasonry as a case study. While Professor Clark discusses the differences between the two Grand Lodges in England, the Ancient Grand lodge and the Premier Grand Lodge, he does not discuss the significance of the emergence of the Royal Arch or of other masonic organisations.

Peter Clark's view is characteristic of many historians: freemasonry equals craft masonry. Other masonic orders are ignored. Yet in England, as you will know, from at least the time of the Union of the Grand Lodges in 1813, the Royal Arch has been an integral part of craft freemasonry. In a famous piece of gobbledegook, the constitutions promulgated in England after the union declare that 'Pure Ancient Masonry consists of three Degrees, and no more, viz. Those of the Entered Apprentice, the Fellow Craft and the Master Mason, including the Supreme Order of the Holy Royal Arch'.

The Royal Arch is thus presented as the completion of the third degree. In Scotland of course the situation is different, but the Royal Arch, though organised separately, still has enormous prestige. Clearly a freemason wanting fully to understand his art will investigate the Royal Arch, and in England he is explicitly urged to do so. But for historians who are not masons, the question posed by the Chairman of my advisory committee remains: do historians and other researchers need to know about the Royal Arch, or is that something only of interest to masons? And if researchers need to take the Arch into account, what do they need to know, and what should they find out?

It goes without saying that a researcher who is ignorant of the Royal Arch will fail to understand a great deal in the letters and documents preserved in libraries such as those at the Grand Lodge of Scotland or Freemasons' Hall in London. For example, a researcher interested in Jewish involvement in freemasonry in the eighteenth century would be very interested in a letter from a lodge in Kent to the Grand Secretary of the Ancient Grand Lodge in London in 1799. This stated that while most members of the lodge had agreed that any good man could enter the various degrees, some had strenuously objected to allowing Jewish brethren to be exalted to the Royal Arch. The lodge secretary asked for guidance on this matter from London. Presumably the brethren who objected to Jewish companions of the Royal Arch interpreted the ceremonies of the Royal Arch as being

exclusively christian. For freemasons, this reference is interesting because it raises the issue of the exact philosophical and ideological implications of the Royal Arch. For the historian, this reference is valuable not only as revealing something of the status of the Jewish community in the Medway Towns at the end of the eighteenth century, but because even more intriguingly it raises the idea of the Royal Arch as representing an inner group within freemasonry, and this is one of the features which I would like to suggest that makes the Royal Arch of interest to historians.

This idea has been already developed in a sinister way by anti-masonic writers writing about Jack the Ripper. The anti-masonic journalist Stephen Knight wrote in 1984 a book called 'Jack the Ripper: The Final Solution'. He argued that there were parallels between the methods used to dispatch prostitutes by Jack the Ripper and penalties imposed by the obligations in the Royal Arch. He suggested that the phrase chalked on a wall near one of the murders, 'The Juwes are not the men that will be blamed for nothing' referred to the apprentices of Hiram Abiff, and was wiped off the wall by order of Sir Charles Warren, the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, because Warren was himself a mason. Knight went on to propose a preposterous theory. This alleged that Queen Victoria's grandson, Prince Albert Victor or 'Prince Eddy', had secretly married a poor catholic shopgirl, who had told the prostitute victims of the Ripper about the marriage. The girls were supposedly murdered by freemasons so

that the secret would never get out. Knight's theory doesn't stand examination and has been comprehensively trashed. Prince Eddy was not in England when the supposed marriage took place; Sir William Gull was not a freemason; and the Juwes do not occur in masonic ritual. The only reason I mention Knight's book here is that Knight argues that the cover-up was organised by freemasons belonging to the Royal Arch. In his view, the Royal Arch was an inner group. He cited an alleged Royal Arch obligation in his book, but, as John Hamill has pointed out, this was taken from an American exposure which never applied in England.

Misinformed and malicious though Stephen Knight's book is, he at least understood that freemasonry is not a single organisation with a simple structure. This unfortunately has not been true of his followers. Earlier this year, an article appeared in the newsletter of the Henry Irving Society, which is devoted to investigating the life and times of the famous Victorian actor. Henry Irving was a freemason, being initiated in the Jerusalem Lodge No. 197 in 1877, but was not raised and passed until five years later, apparently at the suggestion of a royal prince, the Duke of Albany. Irving was one of the founders of the Savage Club Lodge No. 2190 in 1887, formed at the suggestion of the Prince of Wales, and Irving was the lodge's first treasurer. Irving was afterwards a member of the St Martin's Lodge No. 2455. Irving was a freemason and in his masonry encountered royalty. For the authors of the article in the

Irving Society Newsletter the implications of this were clear. Irving must have known about the masonic involvement in the Ripper murders, and went to his grave troubled by this dreadful knowledge.

This is all of course complete bunkum. Irving supported freemasonry and valued his membership, but he did not pursue his masonic career very energetically. He was preoccupied with his acting and rarely had time to attend lodge meetings or take his freemasonry much further. The only office he ever held was as Treasurer of the Savage Club Lodge, and he held this for just a year. This was evidently a gesture to help get the new lodge off the ground. Above all, Irving never joined the Royal Arch or any of the other additional degrees. It is not unusual for freemasons not to be exalted to the Royal Arch, but in Irving's case this fits in with the general impression that he simply did not have time to take his masonry very far. Above all, the fact that Irving was a companion of the Royal Arch means that, even by Stephen Knight's own analysis, Irving was never involved with that inner group which Knight alleges knew the truth about the Ripper. The case of Henry Irving illustrates how urgent and important it is for us to undertake research in the archives about individual freemasons and lodges to counter the kind of anti-masonic propaganda which is still widely disseminated. And in finding out about individual masons, looking at their involvement in the Royal Arch and other orders can tell us a great deal about their outlook on freemasonry. We are all familiar with the

freemason who finds a certain order is particularly to his taste and concentrates his time on work with that order. This can tell us a lot about his personality and outlook on freemasonry. It's the sort of information no biographer can neglect.

For anybody studying English freemasonry, the importance of the Royal Arch is almost immediately evident, and it is obvious that a researcher neglecting the Royal Arch risks missing out a great deal. The Book of Constitutions includes the regulations of Royal Arch Masons, the yearbooks list royal arch chapters, and the directory of Grand Officers includes officers of Supreme Grand Chapter. Yet, even so, although English historians are gradually realising the importance of membership returns of craft lodges in understanding local society, very few use the parallel series of chapter returns. And, on top of this, English masonic scholars neglect the royal arch. We have none of the aids that we take for granted in studying craft freemasonry in England. There is for example no Royal Arch equivalent of John Lane's historical directory of English masonic lodges. In Scotland, of course, the position is even more complicated, as Supreme Grand Chapter has been an entirely separate body, and it might be argued that in Scotland the Royal Arch is no different to the masonic Templars orders or Mark Masonry. But, paradoxically, this in itself provides a powerful reason for investigating the Royal Arch. Just as British history is all too often, and wrongly, identified with English history, so the

history of freemasonry in Britain is all too often seen as simply the history of English freemasonry. The biggest gap in masonic research in Britain is simply that there isn't enough information available about Scottish freemasonry. Above all, the contrasts and comparisons between English and Scottish freemasonry urgently require further investigation, and of these one major area for further investigation is the different position of the Royal Arch (and by extension the other degrees) in each country.

In 1799, the British government was terrified that Britain would suffer a revolution like that which had taken place in France. It had already outlawed organisations which required its members to swear oaths. Now it proposed to make it a criminal offence to belong to any organisation with a national organising committee and which held its meetings behind closed doors. This would have outlawed freemasons' lodges, and the Grand Lodges of England and Scotland lobbied vigorously for special exemptions for freemasonry to be inserted in the act. Amendments were inserted in the bill whereby the Grand Lodges themselves would certify which were regular masonic lodges and would maintain a register of authorised freemasons in return for exemption from the penalties of transportation for offenders stipulated in the legislation. However, there was a constitutional problem in these amendments in that the Grand Lodges were effectively being given police powers, although they weren't bodies established by parliament. When the bill

came to the House of Lords, the Lords were reluctant to allow the exemption for freemasonry because of this problem, and freemasonry came within an ace of being outlawed. The situation was saved by a rousing speech by the Duke of Atholl, and a new amendment was hastily cobbled together which allowed masonic lodges to continued meeting, providing they sent lists of their members to the clerk of the peace. This 1799 Unlawful Societies Act made the legal position of craft masonry clear, but, because the amendment had been drafted so quickly, created many difficulties for the Royal Arch and other degrees, and it was the different interpretations of this legislation in England and Scotland which contributed to the different treatment of the Royal Arch in each country.

In England, the position of the Royal Arch chapters, which were mainly but not exclusively linked to lodges under the Ancients Grand Lodge, was prior to 1799 very unclear and had already given rise to a lot of confusion. Provincial Grand Masters were confused as to what authority they had over Royal Arch chapters. In 1794, the Union Lodge in Kingston, Jamaica, wrote asking whether they were entitled under their warrant to give degrees 'of the Knights of the Red Cross or Rose Croix or Royal Arch'. The Royal Arch provided something of a flashpoint between the two English Grand Lodges with Liverpool lodges complaining that the Ancients were admitting masons belonging to Premier Grand Lodge to the Royal Arch, and Thomas Dunkerley boasting that he

'jockeyed Dermot out' in forming Royal Arch Chapters in Canada. In this confusing situation, the possibility of legislative control caused consternation among Royal Arch Chapters. Were they covered by the proposed exemptions to the 1799 Act? It was decided that they would be, providing they attached themselves to a craft lodge, and it seems that it was this legislative pressure which led to the links being developed in England between craft lodges and Royal Arch chapters.

In England, Royal Arch Chapters were awarded exemption under the 1799 Act, and a number of chapters made returns to the clerk of the peace, such as the Caledonian Chapter No. 2 which met in Surrey Street Westminster. Nevertheless, the ambiguous position of Royal Arch chapters still sometimes caused problems even in England. In Bolton, a meeting of a Royal Arch Chapter held on a Sunday was broken up by the constables and the tavern where the meeting was held was fined. The chapter petitioned the local magistrates protesting that the lodge had followed the 1799 act to the letter and that the meeting involved 'the most solemn concerns and consisted of the explanation of sacred writ and adoration of the infinite architect of the universe'. The local magistrate said that this showed that their order was disgraceful to christianity and that they neglected the sabbath, and threatened to have the lodge closed altogether. Concern about this sort of pressure was evidently a major factor in drawing craft freemasonry and the Royal Arch closer together in England. Other

masonic orders were evidently viewed with suspicion and the decline of the Grand Conclave in England at this time was probably partly due to the fact that its meetings were strictly speaking illegal under the 1799 Act.

In Scotland, it appears that the 1799 Act was interpreted differently, but we badly need more research on this subject. Which Scottish lodges made returns? Did any Royal Arch Chapters or other Scottish masonic bodies attempt to register under the Act? We don't know – the answer lies in local record offices and needs digging out. It appears that the Grand Lodge in Scotland concluded that only craft freemasonry, consisting of the degrees of entered apprentice, fellow craft and master mason, was entitled to exemption under the act, and only craft lodges were registered. This difference in interpretation was to have fundamental implications for the future of freemasonry in Britain. In 1813, at the time of the Union of the English Grand Lodges, the Duke of Sussex expressed his hope that a single Grand Lodge would be established for the whole of the United Kingdom. It was doubtless for this reason that the Duke encouraged Alexander Leuchar, as First Grand Master of the grand Conclave in Scotland, to convene a national committee to exercise control over the Royal Arch in Scotland. The Duke urged Leuchar to persuade the Grand Lodge of Scotland to take the Royal Arch under its wing. If this move had been successful, it would certainly have facilitated an eventual union between the English and Scottish Grand Lodges but, as we know, this attempt was

unsuccessful and in 1817 a separate Supreme Grand Chapter was formed in Scotland, and this major difference in the institutional structure of Scottish freemasonry made a major contribution to the continuation of a separate Grand Lodge in Scotland.

Thus, the Royal Arch was fundamental in determining the Anglo-Scottish relationship in freemasonry and here again is a story which has not yet been told in detail and which urgently requires further investigation. However, I think what can be seen is that the Arch is fundamental in understanding the way in which freemasonry relates to issues of national identity in Britain. And we can see that again if we make a further comparison, this time with Wales. Wales is remarkable because it is one of the few countries in Europe where freemasonry failed to gain a strong foothold in Europe during the eighteenth century. While freemasonry spread across Europe with great speed in the eighteenth century, in Wales lodges were few and far between, and by 1830, there were only two small lodges in the whole of Wales, both of which struggled to keep going. Why was this? The influence of the non-conformist churches in Wales may have been one factor. Language was probably another – at a time when nearly all of Wales was Welsh-speaking, and a large part of the population spoke only Welsh, the Grand Lodge of England was strenuously opposed to the ritual being worked in Welsh. Freemasonry was only to find a firmer foothold in Wales as a greater policy of Anglicisation emerged from the 1860s onwards.

One very good indicator of the slow progress of freemasonry in Wales is the very late development of the Royal Arch. While craft lodges are viable, greater commitment is required to maintain Arch chapters, so the relatively limited character of Welsh freemasonry up to the end of the nineteenth century is particularly apparent in the development of the Royal Arch. This can be seen by looking at South Wales. The first Grand Superintendent for the Royal Arch in South Wales was not appointed until 1865. At that time there were just two chapters, one in Cardiff and one in Swansea. In the following ten years only another two chapters were consecrated, and when the Grand Superintendent died another one was not appointed for some years. Eventually in 1886 a drive to set up Royal Arch chapters was begun, and by 1915 there were 9 chapters with 658 members. From this point, however, industrial depression began to affect South Wales, and it was not really until after the Second World War that the Royal Arch began fully to develop in South Wales, with almost a third of craft membership joining the Royal Arch. So the Royal Arch provides a useful index of the state of Welsh freemasonry, but again there is useful research that can be done here. For example, comparative figures on the number of chapters and membership statistics from Scotland and England would enable the Welsh figures to be more fully interpreted.

One of the most determined early attempts to introduce freemasonry in Wales was undertaken by Benjamin Plummer, a Bristol merchant who was Grand Senior Warden of the Ancients. Plummer first visited Wales at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and he wrote that he found that there at this time 'but two lodges, one of them in Swansea, which was very thinly attended, and the other at Brecon in a dormant state'. During a period of eight years from 1807, Plummer established eight new lodges in Wales and initiated more than two hundred masons. He planned his campaign like a military conquest. He selected Caerphilly as his starting point, then used a kind of swarming technique, with members of the Caerphilly lodge establishing lodges in nearby towns, whose members in turn formed further lodges elsewhere. Members of the Caerphilly lodge set up new lodges in Cardiff, Newport and Merthyr. Members of the Newport lodge established lodges in Pontypool and Carmarthen. The Pontypool lodge helped set up a lodge in Abergavenny, and so on. This process was assisted by the masonic lodges of French prisoners of war billeted in towns like Abergavenny, with whom Plummer maintained close contacts. Plummer's energy in pursuing this strategy is evident in his breathless correspondence with Grand Lodge, dealing with dozens of detailed queries about the new lodges and issuing a stream of complicated instructions for forwarding his mail as he moved from place to place.

Plummer's attempts forcibly to implant freemasonry in Wales could create problems. A Modern lodge had been reestablished at Carmarthen in 1810, but disputes had arisen and Plummer saw a recruiting opportunity for the Antients, boasting to Grand Lodge that if an Antient lodge could be created in Carmarthen, thirty masons from the rival Grand Lodge would join it. An Antient lodge was duly consecrated by Plummer at Carmarthen, with masons from his Newport lodge as the senior officers. Returning to the lodge a few months later, Plummer found it in uproar because the Master had secretly taken the lodge warrant and equipment by boat to Tenby and illicitly created masons there. Plummer annulled these proceedings and claimed he had restored harmony to the lodge, but the Master wrote to Grand Lodge complaining about Plummer's overbearing manner. He alleged that Plummer had insisted that the lodge pass a vote of thanks to him and, when this was passed by only a small majority, had gone from house to house with a petition supporting his actions, which he had bullied members of the lodge into signing. Plummer countered by sending to Grand Lodge documentary evidence of the Master's dubious proceedings at Tenby, including an account of his expenses there which included an expensive box at the theatre and ten pounds for 'dinner bill and girls'.

In the course of these disputes at Carmarthen, the Master of the lodge repeatedly insisted that what was required to settle these disputes was a Royal Arch Chapter. He wrote

that 'there appeared to myself and about 10 or 11 other members of both lodges no other chance of settling these disputes but by having a Royal Arch charter in order that those who conducted themselves improperly should be excluded for some months at least'. The expedition to Tenby seems to have been closely connected to this attempt to set up a Royal Arch Chapter. The Master had written to a member of the lodge at Tenby asking him 'as a particular favour that you will sign your name as Royal Arch and get as many as you can of that order to do the same...but do not write anything else or say a word'. This was apparently an attempt to get the brethren at Tenby secretly to petition for a Royal Arch chapter. Instructing one member of the lodge to collect selected members of it to travel to Tenby, the Master instructed him to 'bring my black clothes, best apron, Royal Arch apron, Black apron to lend, sash and maltese cross, and your Royal Arch jewel in case we make you that order'. Now be alive, he urged him, for dinner is ordered for 10 gents. He also instructed him to make sure that the Tyler was 'alive and in prime order to show the natives what a Tyler we have'.

In this Carmarthen case, the formation of a Royal Arch chapter was explicitly linked to the creation of an inner group in order effectively to exclude brethren in the craft lodge from masonic activity. This case raises perhaps the central reason why we need to research the Royal Arch. Thirty years ago, social historians interpreted society through the prism of class. It was assumed that relations

between people were determined primarily by their economic relations – you were a landowner or a tenant, a capitalist, a manager or a factory worker, and so on. In this context, it is not perhaps surprising that historians paid little attention to freemasonry, since it tended to be assumed (perhaps wrongly) that freemasons were generally drawn from the same class, and the study of freemasonry would not contribute much to understanding of class relations. Nowadays, reacting in particular to the criticisms of feminist scholars, who have pointed out that gender is just as important as class, social historians stress the multiplicity of social relations. We have contact with one another on a variety of different levels – as employees, as customers, as members of the same social club, as members of particular gender, race, or nationality, and so on. Consequently, historians have become more interested in social networks – the interconnections at many different levels between individuals. If one wants to understand social networks in a particular town or community, then clearly freemasonry, as one of the largest and most important social organisations, is of central importance. It is this awareness of the possible role of freemasonry in social networks that explains the current interest of historians in freemasonry.

But, as I said earlier, historians and other scholars who are not masons frequently have a naive view of freemasonry. They consider it to be a simple, single-stranded institution. You are either a freemason or not.

The case of the Camarthen master and his expedition to Tenby to create a Royal arch chapter illustrates forcefully the social complexities of freemasonry. Within the social network of freemasonry itself, there are many different levels of contact and status – you may meet some people at a craft lodge, others in a Royal Arch chapter, others as Knights Templar, and so on. And the social interaction in each of these contexts may be different. In the Carmarthen case, the Royal Arch was clearly being used to create an inner group, and to try and exclude some members of the craft lodge who were found objectionable. Moreover, there is also a frequent assumption by historians who are interested in networks that these networks are usually harmonious, whereas the Carmarthen case shows how social organisations such as masonic lodges can also create social conflict. If we research freemasonry to investigate local social networks, then to get a full picture of these networks we also need to investigate the Royal Arch, as well as masonic orders. The masonic network is not the simple two-dimensional network which might be suggested by just looking at craft freemasonry. The Royal Arch shows how this network is complex and multi-dimensional.

Other speakers will I am sure explain why it is necessary in order to have a full and proper understanding of freemasonry, it is necessary to think about and reflect on the Royal Arch. What I have tried to do is to suggest why those of us who are investigating freemasonry for other reasons – for example to find out about social history –

also need to consider the Royal Arch. If we are investigating the involvement in freemasonry of men like Henry Irving, their interest or otherwise about the Royal Arch can tell us a great deal about their overall attitude to freemasonry. If we are interested in the institutional development of freemasonry, and the way in which its institutional development in countries like Scotland, Wales and England relates to issues like national identity, then again the Royal Arch is an integral part of that story. If we are interested in the way in which freemasonry forms a part of local social networks, then the Royal Arch forms its own thread within those networks.

But above all the history of the Royal Arch is neglected in Scotland, England and Wales. There is a lot more basic information which needs gathering. We need lists of Royal Arch chapters similar to those compiled for craft lodges by John Lane and George Draffen. We need to know how many craft masons became Companions of the Royal Arch, and what factors affected enthusiasm for the Royal Arch. While the contents of masonic minute books remained largely unexamined for historical purposes, even less exploration of the records of Royal Arch chapters has taken place. Who founded the chapters, when and why? The answer lies in Chapter petitions, another neglected source. In short, if the records of craft masonry are a resource little explored by historians, the records of the Royal Arch are largely *terra incognita*. We need to explore them.

The Royal Arch, in the English view, is about completion. And in order fully to complete historical researches into freemasonry, it is imperative to take into account the Royal Arch. the American early nineteenth-century poet James Gates Percival wrote a series of masonic songs, which included a Royal Arch Song. Let me conclude by giving you a snatch of it (not sung, I'm afraid):

Joy! the secret vault is found;
Full the sunbeam falls within,
Pointing, darkly underground,
To the treasure we would win:
They have brought it forth to light,
And again it cheers the earth;
All its leaves are purely bright,
Shining in their newest worth.

The archives of the Royal Arch represent for historians just such a secret forgotten vault.

The Study of Freemasonry as a New Academic Discipline

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‘Why have Kings and Princes, the Nobility, Judges and Statesmen, Soldiers and Sailors, Clergy and Doctors, and men in every walk of life sought to enter the Portals of Freemasonry?’

G. W. Daynes, *The Birth and Growth of the Grand Lodge of England* (London: Masonic Record, 1926), p. 185.

Introduction

Stephen Yeo’s 1976 book, *Religions and Voluntary Organisations in Crisis*, is a study of the social life of the English town of Reading between 1890 and 1914.¹ Yeo describes a town whose social fabric was bound together by many voluntary organisations and activities, ‘from Congregational chapels to the Social Democratic Federation, from Hospital Sunday Parades to Literary and Scientific Societies’.² This social ecology was rooted in the churches and in a paternalistic culture encouraged by large employers such as Reading’s famous biscuit manufacturers, Huntley and Palmer. Yeo paints a vivid

picture of a vibrant associational culture which has now largely disappeared. Yet, Yeo admits, there was one major omission in his study. He describes how ‘A congregationalist minister in the 1960s, showing me the photographs of deacons, etc., on the wall of the vestry of his chapel, told me that I could not really understand late 19th-century chapel life without knowing about the masons. The Vicars of St. Mary’s and of St. Giles at different dates before 1914 were both high in the local masonic hierarchy.’³ Yeo went to the local masonic hall, but was not allowed to examine the records held there. The freemasons, one of the largest and most prestigious of Reading’s voluntary organisations, with in 1895 three separate lodges⁴, were consequently left out of Yeo’s book.

Since Yeo wrote, there has been a silent revolution in English freemasonry. Partly in response to attacks on freemasonry by writers such as Stephen Knight, masonic libraries and museums have been opened to the public. The magnificent Library and Museum of Freemasonry at Freemasons’ Hall in London offers daily public tours, and in the 2002 ‘Open House’ event attracted over 2,000 visitors in one day. Its library is freely available to scholars and lists of its historical

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 341, n. 46; 351, n. 94.

⁴ Lodge of Union No. 414, Grey Friars’ Lodge No. 1101, Kendrick Lodge No. 2043: John Lane, *Masonic Records 1717-1894*, London: Freemasons’ Hall 1895 (2nd ed.), pp. 267, 345, 425, which also lists five earlier lodges in Reading which had been erased: pp. 30, 87, 91, 111.

¹ Stephen Yeo, *Religion and Voluntary Societies in Crisis*, London: Croom Helm 1976.

² *Ibid.*, p. 1.

correspondence and early returns of membership are being mounted on the internet.⁵ The Province of Berkshire, which contains Reading, has one of the largest provincial libraries, with over 13,000 books, and the library is now open daily to the general public. Berkshire was one of the first English provinces to establish a web site.⁶ I am myself an incarnation of this new policy. In 2000, the University of Sheffield established, with funding from *United Grand Lodge*, the Province of Yorkshire West Riding and Lord Northampton, the Pro Grand Master, the first centre in a British university devoted to the scholarly study of freemasonry.⁷ Although I am not a mason, I was appointed as the first Director of this Centre.

Of course, the cautiousness of the English Grand Lodge from which Yeo suffered was not shared by all the European Grand Lodges. The Grand East of the Netherlands has for many years welcomed scholars

wishing to use its remarkable library.⁸ Shortly after Yeo's book was published, Professor Margaret Jacob made use of the library of the Grand East and her resulting book, *Radical Enlightenment: Pantheists, Freemasons and Republicans*,⁹ has profoundly altered our perception of the cultural history of 18th-century Europe.¹⁰ The willingness of the *Grand East of the Netherlands* to make its collections available to scholars has played a significant part in the upsurge in scholarly interest in freemasonry over the last twenty years. Trevor Stewart has recently compiled a bibliography of articles on European freemasonry which have appeared in academic periodicals since 1980. This contains 269 entries, and even this gives only a partial view of the full extent of research into freemasonry, since it excludes articles on America, Africa and Asia, as well as periodicals published by masonic bodies, theses and monographs.¹¹

⁵ www.a2a.pro.gov.uk; Rebecca Coombes, 'Subject for Enquiry: Sources for Research and Historical Bibliography in the Library and Museum of Freemasonry, London', in: R. William Weisberger, Wallace McLeod and S. Brent Morris (eds.), *Freemasonry on Both Sides of the Atlantic: Essays concerning the Craft in the British Isles, Europe, the United States and Mexico*, New York: Columbia University Press 2002, pp. 755-80; Rebecca Coombes, 'Genealogical Records at the Library and Museum of Freemasonry: a Survey of Resources', *Family History Monthly* 73 (October 2001), pp. 22-5.

⁶ www.berkspgl.org.uk.

⁷ www.shef.ac.uk/~crf.

⁸ www.vrijmetserarij.nl; Evert Kwaadgrass, 'George Kloss and His Masonic Library', *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum* 111 (1998), pp. 25-43.

⁹ London: George Allen and Unwin 1981.

¹⁰ Jacob's work has generally not been well received by English masonic scholars, but for a historian's view of the fundamental importance of her work, see Roy Porter, *Enlightenment: Britain and the Creation of the Modern World*, London: Penguin Books 2000, pp. 5-6, 30, 32.

¹¹ Trevor Stewart, 'European Periodical Literature on Masonic Research: A Review of Two Decades of Achievement', in: Weisberger, McLeod and Morris, *op. cit.*, pp. 805-936.

Despite all this work, our picture of freemasonry remains fragmented. In many countries, particularly England, freemasonry is still considered an exotic subject outside the scholarly mainstream.¹² It is often forgotten by scholars even when it should loom large. For example, Noble Frankland's 1993 biography of the Duke of Connaught, who as Grand Master from 1901 to 1939 was one of the dominant figures in modern English freemasonry, makes no mention of the Duke's masonic career.¹³ The picture is of course different in Europe and America where there is a long-standing scholarly interest in freemasonry, but even here there is no overall consensus on the importance and significance of freemasonry. Trevor Stewart's bibliography illustrates how freemasonry is relevant to an enormous range of subjects from garden history to theatre studies, but broader connecting themes are not immediately evident. Scholars frequently use masonic evidence simply to confirm and further illustrate established themes and

¹² John M. Roberts, 'Freemasonry: the Possibilities of a Neglected Topic', *English Historical Review* 84 (1969), pp. 323-335; cf. the review by Roberts of Jasper Ridley, *The Freemasons*, in the *Times Literary Supplement*, 14 January 2000, pp. 3-4.

¹³ Noble Frankland, *Witness of a Century, the Life and Times of Prince Arthur Duke of Connaught*, London: Shephard-Walwyn, 1993. For details of the Duke of Connaught's masonic career, see Sir George Aston and Evelyn Graham, *His Royal Highness the Duke of Connaught and Strathearn: A life and Intimate Study*, London: George C. Harrap 1929, pp. 335-9; A. R. Hewitt, 'Biographical Lists of Grand Masters', in: A. S. Frere (ed.), *Grand Lodge 1717-1967*, Oxford: United Grand Lodge of England, p. 277.

ideas. Pierre Chevallier's history of French freemasonry is one of the great achievements of masonic scholarship, but ultimately it simply reinforces traditional French republican historiography.¹⁴ The limitations of current scholarly research into freemasonry are epitomised by William Weisberger's recent study of the role of Prague and Viennese freemasonry in Enlightenment.¹⁵ While the essay carefully documents the activities of the Czech and Austrian lodges, the value of the study is limited by its stereotyped and hackneyed view of the Enlightenment.¹⁶

¹⁴ Pierre Chevallier, *Histoire de la franc-maçonnerie française*, Paris: Fayard 1974-5. Compare Chevallier's interpretation of events under the Second Empire and Third Republic with the more challenging analysis offered by Phillip Nord, *The Republican Moment: Struggles for Democracy in Nineteenth-Century France*, Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press 1999, pp. 15-30, which suggests that support by freemasonry for the Third Republic reflected not only the harsh treatment of freemasonry under the Second Empire, but also the influence of significant groups of 'seekers of the absolute, legatees of utopian socialism, radical republicans'.

¹⁵ R. William Weisberger, 'Prague and Viennese Freemasonry, the Enlightenment, and the Operations of the True Harmony Lodge of Vienna', in: Weisberger, McLeod and Morris, *op. cit.*, pp. 375-420.

¹⁶ For example, Weisberger arbitrarily categorises people as 'enlighteners' and refers to enlightenment ideas as if they were an accepted and defined doctrinal canon, so that, on p. 375, it is stated that masonry served as a vehicle for the promotion of the enlightenment, and on p. 393, a journal is described as concerned with the propagation of masonic and enlightenment ideas, both assuming that the enlightenment was a very simplistic phenomenon.

Work such as that of Margaret Jacob, which uses masonic evidence as a springboard for the development of new perspectives which alter our view of an entire period, is extremely rare.

As the exploration of masonic archives by scholars continues, what kind of broader themes will emerge? If research into freemasonry claims to be a new and emerging academic discipline, what will be its distinguishing features? I can only briefly sketch some of the possibilities here, and I hope you will forgive me if I confine my remarks to Britain, since this has been the focus of my own research.

Historical and Social Data in Masonic Archives

As we continue to explore the masonic archive, we will find a great deal of information bearing on old kinds of history, on royalty, politicians and governments, and this cannot be ignored. Many of the English Grand Masters since 1782 have been members of the royal family, but the significance of this for the British monarchy as an institution has never been fully investigated.¹⁷ Freemasonry is one of the British institutions in which the aristocracy still holds sway, and the role of the aristocracy in British freemasonry provides a fruitful area

All recent research on the enlightenment has stressed its multi-faceted and complex character.

¹⁷ cf Roberts, *op. cit.*, p. 324: 'There must surely be something of sociological interest in an institution whose English Grand Masters have since 1721 always been noblemen and have included seven princes of the blood...'

of study for scholars interested in the decline and fall of the British aristocracy. Occasionally, freemasonry has been caught up in wider political events. For example, in 1929, shortly before the election of the second Labour government, a new masonic lodge, the *New Welcome Lodge No. 5139*, was formed at the behest of the then Prince of Wales.¹⁸ This lodge was intended exclusively for Labour members of parliament and party officials, and reflected a concern that Labour Party activists had frequently been blackballed by masonic lodges. The *New Welcome Lodge* was intended to ensure that the new socialist government was not alienated from freemasonry. It was also hoped that the lodge would draw more working men into freemasonry, and that masonic values would reduce 'unsettling influences' on the shop floor.¹⁹ Although the *New Welcome Lodge* was initially very successful in recruiting Labour M.P.s

¹⁸ *New Welcome Lodge No. 5139, 50th Anniversary Meeting*: 'The Grand Secretary informed Bro. Rockliff that the then Prince of Wales (afterwards King Edward VIII, later Duke of Windsor) was somewhat concerned at the number of occasions on which ballots taken in lodges appeared to be used to exclude from masonry Labour MPs seeking membership therein. HRH had therefore suggested to the Grand Secretary that a lodge might be formed specially for the purpose of enabling Labour MPs and officials to become masons if they so desired'.

¹⁹ The petition and accompanying memoranda for formation of the lodge in the Library and Museum of Freemasonry, Freemasons' Hall, London, do not refer directly to the Labour party connection of the lodge, but stressed these broader connections: see Appendix, Document No. 2, below.

(including Sir Robert Young, the Deputy Speaker, Arthur Greenwood, Foreign Secretary and Deputy Leader of the Labour Party, and Scott Lindsay, the Labour Party Secretary),²⁰ the formation of the National Government changed the political situation, and from 1934 *New Welcome Lodge* was opened up to MPs of all parties and to staff working at the Palace of Westminster, becoming essentially a house facility of the Palace of Westminster.²¹

Undoubtedly the most fascinating information in the masonic archive are the details of well-known people who were freemasons. The legal and social reformer, Lord Brougham, was initiated as a freemason on an impulse while he was on holiday in the Hebrides.²² Was this a passing episode in Brougham's life, or did the values of freemasonry influence Brougham's legal reforms? The same question can be asked of many other prominent figures in British history who were freemasons. In July 1885, the English masonic newspaper, *The Freemason*, listed members of the

²⁰ Library and Museum of Freemasonry, London, returns of New Welcome Lodge No. 5139; cf. Ben Pimlott (ed.), *The Political Diary of Hugh Dalton*, London: Jonathan Cape and London School of Economics 1986, pp. 224, 265, 268-9.

²¹ *New Welcome Lodge No. 5139, 50th Anniversary Meeting* states that in 1934 no Member of Parliament appeared for initiation. An emergency meeting of the Lodge was held and 'there was agreement that all future initiates and joining members should have some connection with Parliament'.

²² See Appendix, Document No. 1, below.

government and royal household who were freemasons.²³ Among those named by *The Freemason* were Sir Charles Dilke, President of the Local Government Board from 1882 to 1885, who was the leader of the radical faction within the Liberal party and the most eminent advocate of republicanism. Despite his republican views, Dilke became a close friend of the Prince of Wales. How far was this friendship fostered by their common freemasonry? Likewise, Dilke was close to French republican leaders such as Gambetta, who were also masons. The list in *The Freemason* also included one of Dilke's political opponents, Lord Randolph Churchill, father of Sir Winston Churchill. Lord Randolph was a populist Tory whose personality was one of the most puzzling in 19th-century politics. In the case of Lord Randolph, further investigation of his masonic career would be interesting for the extent to which it would assist in interpreting his difficult character.

Just as the masonic archive provides new information about people, so it also sheds new light on places. The masonic archive is particularly rich in information about local life and networks. The campaign for more democratic town government in the 1820s and 1830s has been overshadowed by the movement for parliamentary reform, but municipal reform was in some ways a more potent focus of local political activism. In the town of Monmouth on the Welsh borders a campaign against the control of the town by the Duke of Beaufort

²³ *The Freemason*, 4 July 1885, p. 329.

created fierce local controversy in the 1820s.²⁴ The archives of the English Grand Lodge include correspondence which gives new information about this dispute.²⁵ The leader of the reform party, Trevor Philpotts, was the master of the local masonic lodge, the *Royal Augustus Lodge*. One of the members of the lodge was Joseph Price, a cantankerous member of the group opposed to reform. In 1821, Price was accused by Philpotts of abusing his position as a magistrate by granting a friend preferential treatment in prison. The masonic lodge passed a series of resolutions against Price, one of which referred to his alleged abuse of his judicial authority. Price protested to the Grand Master, the Duke of Sussex, that this procedure was unmasonic. The Duke suspended the lodge, much to the annoyance of Philpotts who was anxious that the lodge should participate in the forthcoming consecration of a lodge in nearby Newport. Following protests by Philpotts, the Duke lifted the suspension of the lodge. This news was greeted joyfully in the town and the church bells were rung in celebration. This prompted a further round of correspondence with the Grand Lodge, since Price complained that he only heard of the Grand Master's decision in his case when the bells started ringing.

²⁴ Keith Kisack, *Monmouth: The Making of a County Town*, London: Phillimore, pp. 56-109.

²⁵ Library and Museum of Freemasonry, London, returns of the Royal Augustus Lodge No. 656, Monmouth; United Grand Lodge, Letter Book B, ff. 126, 134, 192; Historical Correspondence, 5/D/5-6. See Appendix, Document No. 3, below.

Public and Private Space

As this case illustrates, lodges were an important feature of local life. Parades and processions were until recently a major focus of public life in towns,²⁶ and masonic parades were particularly significant, because they were associated with the ceremonies performed by freemasons for the dedication of public buildings and marked

²⁶ See for example Susan G. Davis, *Parades and Power: Street Theatre in Nineteenth-Century Philadelphia*, Berkeley: University of California Press 1986; Mark Harrison, *Crowds and History: Mass Phenomena in English Towns 1790-1835*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1988, pp. 140-67, 202-67; Neil Jarman, *Material Conflicts: Parades and Visual Displays in Northern Ireland*, Oxford: Berg Publishers 1997; Pamela King, 'Squads and Ha's: Gender Roles and Civic Space in Lerwick's Up Helly Aa', paper at the University of Sheffield conference 'Lodges, Chapters and Orders: Fraternal Organisations and the Shaping of Gender Roles in Europe', 2002 (available on-line at: www.shef.ac.uk/~crf/news/besantconf/king.htm); Susan Smith, 'Where to Draw the Line: A Geography of Popular Festivity' in Alisdair Rogers and Steven Verdovec (eds.), *The Urban Context: Ethnicity, Social Networks and Situational Analysis*, Oxford: Berg Publishers 1995, pp. 141-164; Meg Twycross, 'The Triumph of Isabella, or the Archduchess and the Parrot', paper at the University of Sheffield conference 'Lodges, Chapters and Orders: Fraternal Organisations and the Shaping of Gender Roles in Europe', 2002 (abstract available on-line at: www.shef.ac.uk/~crf/news/besantconf/twycross.htm); Robert Withington, *English Pageantry: an Historical Outline*, Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press 1918, 2, pp. 3-193.

important stages in the development of the town.²⁷ In Sheffield, for example, the opening of a canal providing the town's first link to the sea in 1819 was celebrated by processions of lodges from Sheffield and the surrounding area, and extracts from masonic minute books describing these ceremonies were framed and proudly displayed in the offices of the canal company.²⁸ Such processions provided both a public face for freemasonry and associated freemasonry with the town's cultural identity.

²⁷ Trevor Stewart, "'Through the Streets They Tramp and Go!': an Examination of Scottish Masonic Processions" in M. D. J. Scanlan (ed.), *The Social Impact of Freemasonry on the Modern Western World*, The Canonbury Papers 1, London: Canonbury Masonic Research Centre 2002; Petri Mirala, "'A Large Mob, Calling Themselves Freemasons': Masonic Parades in Ulster", in: Peter Jupp and Eoin Magennis (eds.), *Crowds in Ireland, c. 1720-1920*, London: Macmillan 2000, pp. 117-39.

²⁸ See Appendix, Document No. 4, below. Other masonic parades in Sheffield included: the laying of the foundation stone of Sheffield Infirmary (1793) and the opening of the Infirmary (1797): J. R. Clarke, *The History of Britannia Lodge*, Sheffield: J. W. Northend 1961, pp. 17-18; the Proclamation of the Peace (1814): Clarke, *op. cit.*, p. 18; the laying of the foundation stone of St George's, Brookhouse Hill (1821): Clyde Binfield, David Hey et al., eds: *The History of the City of Sheffield 1843-1993*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press 1993), 2, p. 372; the laying of the foundation stone of St Mary's, Bramall Lane (1824): *ibid.*, pp 372-3; the laying of the foundation stone of St Andrew's Presbyterian church, Hanover Street (July 1855): Binfield, Hey et al., *op. cit.*, 2, p. 413; the laying of the foundation stone of the alms house commemorating the Holmfirth Flood of 1852 (21 April 1856): J. G. Fardell, *A Sermon preached at Holmfirth Church on Monday, April 21st, 1856...*, Huddersfield: Joseph Brook 1856.

Moreover, they explicitly linked freemasons with the physical reshaping of urban public space. Such landmarks in the remodelling of Edinburgh between 1750 and 1820 as the completion of the new university buildings, the George IV Bridge and the docks at Leith were marked by huge masonic processions.²⁹ In London, the Prince Regent, who was Grand Master of the *Premier Grand Lodge*, was the driving force behind the redevelopment of large parts of the west end. When the Prince as Grand Master formally dedicated in enormous public ceremonies such major new buildings as the Covent Garden Theatre, on the site of the present Royal Opera House, this conjunction between freemasonry and public space achieved a very potent expression.³⁰

While freemasonry had a close engagement with public space through its processional activity, lodge meetings by contrast took place in a private, closed space, guarded by the Tyler. In a recent article, Hugh Urban has used the insights of theorists such as Pierre Bourdieu to consider ways in which the closed space and secrecy of the lodge meeting facilitated the elaboration of concepts of social power and hierarchy in late 19th-

²⁹ Stewart, *op. cit.*, pp. 101-102; *The History of Free Masonry... with an Account of the Grand lodge of Scotland*, Edinburgh: Alex. Lawrie 1800, pp. 168-183, 192-5, 200, 212-21, 236-41, 243-55, 256-62, 281-91. An illustration of the laying of the foundation stone of New College, Edinburgh, is in: John Hamill and R. A. Gilbert, *World Freemasonry*, London: Aquarian Press 1991, p. 135.

³⁰ William Preston, *Illustrations of Masonry*, London: G. Wilkie 1812, pp. 392-8: see Appendix, Document No. 5, below.

century America.³¹ Changes in spatial relationships within the lodge meeting could reflect wider social changes. Mary Ann Clawson, for example, has shown how the use of stage settings with proscenium arches and elaborate drop curtains in Scottish Rite initiations from the late 19th century onwards can be related to the rise of leisure activities which stressed consumption by a passive audience.³² In England, the most concrete expression of this need for a closed space was the development of the masonic hall. Until the 1850s, most masonic meetings took place in rooms in taverns, a space which was on the borderland between private and public.³³ The campaign for purpose-built masonic halls

³¹ Hugh B. Urban, 'The Adornment of Silence: Secrecy and Symbolic Power in American Freemasonry', *Journal of Religion and Society* 3 (2001): available online at <http://moses.creighton.edu/JRS/2001/2001-2.html>.

³² Mary Ann Clawson, 'Spectatorship and Masculinity in the Scottish Rite', in: C. Lance Brockman (ed.), *Theatre of the Fraternity: Staging the Ritual Space of the Scottish Rite of Freemasonry*, Minneapolis: Frederick R. Weismann Art Museum 1996; 'Fraternal Association and the Problem of Masculine Consumption', paper at the University of Sheffield conference 'Lodges, Chapters and Orders: Fraternal Organisations and the Shaping of Gender Roles in Europe', 2002 (abstract available online at: www.shef.ac.uk/~crf/news/besantconf/clawson.htm)

³³ cf. Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850*, London: Hutchinson 1987, pp. 427-9. The drive for the building of masonic halls can be traced in *The Freemasons' Magazine* in the 1850s and 1860s. The details for individual lodges are documented in Lane, *op. cit.*

was an expression of the fetish of respectability which was a characteristic of the Victorian middle classes. In towns such as Sheffield, the masonic halls formed part of the development of a new city centre with public squares and buildings.³⁴ The creation of such urban centres was a spatial expression of the power of the new middle-class urban élites, intended to provide, in the words of Simon Gunn, 'a symbolic centre at the heart of an emptied public space as well as to affirm the collective power and presence of the provincial bourgeoisies'.³⁵ The masonic halls in the midst of these civic centres, devoted to secret ceremonies performed by lodges whose membership was in principle open to all respectable men of the town but in practice carefully controlled, powerfully symbolised the nature of these new élites.

³⁴ Simon Gunn, 'The Middle Class, Modernity and the Provincial City: Manchester c. 1840-80' in Alan Kidd and David Nicholls (eds.), *Gender, Civic Culture and Consumerism: Middle-Class Identity in Britain 1800-1940*, Manchester: Manchester University Press 1999, pp. 112-127; Andy Croll, *Civilizing the Urban: Popular Culture and Public Space in Merthyr, c. 1870-1914*, Cardiff, University of Wales Press 2000, pp. 36-61. On the Sheffield masonic hall, see Appendix, Document No. 6, below, and also Clarke, *op. cit.*, pp. 36-7, 87-8; Binfield, Hey et al., *op. cit.*, 2, p. 57. In Monmouth, for example, the local masonic lodge took over in 1841 a theatre in the centre of the town, which received a facade similar in style to that recently added to the town's methodist church: Kissack, *op. cit.*, p. 259.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

Gender Issues, Masculinity and Emancipation

Space as an expression of power and hierarchy is a prominent theme in modern scholarship to which the study of freemasonry has much to contribute. Masonic halls and civic centres were masculine spaces, distinguished from the other major development of the late Victorian city, the department store, seen as a largely female space.³⁶ The analysis of Catherine Hall and Leonore Davidoff tracing the emergence in the 18th and 19th centuries of separate spheres for different sexes has influenced much recent work on social history, and provides another powerful interpretative framework for masonic history.³⁷ This is shown by the works of Robert Beachy, who has recently discussed how masonic apologetic writings of the late 18th century helped popularise stereotypes of differences between men and

³⁶ Victoria de Grazia and Ellen Furlough (eds.), *The Sex of Things: Gender and Consumption in Historical Perspective*, Berkeley: University of California Press 1996; Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, 'The Architecture of Public and Private Life: English Middle-Class Society in a Provincial Town 1780-1850', in: Derek Fraser and Anthony Sutcliffe (eds.), *The Pursuit of Urban History*, London: Edward Arnold 1983, pp. 326-45; Christopher P. Hosgood, 'Mrs Pooter's Purchase: Lower-Middle-Class Consumerism and the Sales 1870-1914', in: Alan Kidd and David Nicholls, *op. cit.*, pp. 146-63.

³⁷ Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes*. The perceptive short discussion of freemasonry on pp. 425-8 of this book has been generally overlooked.

women,³⁸ and Mark Carnes, who has analysed how the rituals of fraternal societies shaped middle-class views of masculinity in 19th-century America.³⁹

19th-century masonic writings are a rich source of information about the social and moral outlook of the middle-class male.⁴⁰ For example, masonic sermons and speeches are a useful but neglected source for the study of the mentality of the new provincial élites of the Victorian and Edwardian periods. An oration given by M. C. Peck, Provincial Grand Secretary of the North and East Ridings of Yorkshire, at the dedication of a masonic hall in Hull in 1890 outlines the qualities expected of an upright male inhabitant of Hull at that time.⁴¹ He should believe in God, treat his neighbour fairly, and look after his own body and mind. He should avoid extravagance and intemperance, and bear misfortune with fortitude. 'Masons should never be sharp men as the world calls

³⁸ Robert Beachy, 'Masonic Apologetic Writings and the Construction of Gender in Enlightenment Europe', paper at the 2002 University of Sheffield conference 'Lodges, Chapters and Orders: Fraternal Organisations and the Shaping of Gender Roles in Europe 1300-2000. Abstract available on-line at www.shef.ac.uk/~crf/news/besantconf/beachy.htm.

³⁹ Mark Carnes, 'Middle-Class Men and the Solace of Fraternal Ritual' in *Meanings for Manhood: Constructions of Masculinity in Victorian America*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 1990, pp. 37-66; *Secret Ritual and Manhood in Victorian America*, New Haven: Yale University Press 1989.

⁴⁰ See Appendix, Document No. 7, below.

⁴¹ M. C. Peck, *Three Orations Delivered in Connection with the Wilberforce Lodge No. 2134, Hull*, Hull: 1890.

them, ready to cheat and overreach their fellows. How commonly we hear those who should no better affect to praise a man for his acuteness and business abilities, but would they trust him with their own affairs? On the other hand the truly just and honest man is the noblest work of God, and none can merit higher praise than he!’ Despite their confident tone, there is not far beneath these words an anxiety which recalls Mark Carnes’s comment that late Victorian freemasonry provided respite from the growing economic and social pressures of the outside world: ‘even as the emerging middle classes were embracing capitalism and bourgeois sensibilities, they were simultaneously creating rituals whose message was largely antithetical to those relationships and values’.⁴²

In England, the masculine solace provided by freemasonry was closely linked to memories of school and school life. Paul Rich has suggested that public schools and freemasonry were lynchpins of a ritualism which was a major cultural bond of the British Empire.⁴³

⁴² Carnes, ‘Middle-Class Men and the Solace of Fraternal Ritual’, p. 51.

⁴³ P. J. Rich, ‘Public-school Freemasonry in the Empire: “Mafia of the Mediocre?”’, in: J. A. Mangan (ed.), *‘Benefits Bestowed’? Education and British Imperialism*, Manchester: Manchester University Press 1988, pp. 174-92; *Elixir of Empire: The English Public Schools, Ritualism, Freemasonry, and Imperialism*, London: Regency Press 1989; *Chains of Empire: English Public Schools, Masonic Cabalism, Historical Causality, and Imperial Clubdom*, London: Regency Press 1991; *The Invasions of the Gulf: Radicalism, Ritualism and the Shaikhs*, Cambridge: Allborough Press 1991. Unfortunately, while these books hint at the richness and

Freemasonry enabled the adult male to relive the bonding rituals of school or university. Lodges were founded specifically for members of particular schools or universities,⁴⁴ which sought, in the words of a circular proposing the formation of a lodge for old boys of a small London grammar school, to weld ‘in the closer ties of fraternal good will those friendships which so many of us formed during our School life’.⁴⁵ The symbiotic relationship between school life and modern freemasonry is encapsulated by an article on a school lodge in the Aldenham School Magazine cited by Paul Rich, which declares that ‘I wonder if you really knew what life at school was all about until you joined’.⁴⁶ A recent history by Christopher Tyerman of Harrow School, where Sir Winston Churchill was educated, emphasises the central role of freemasonry in school life, noting that ‘Between 1885 and 1971 headmasters tended to be freemasons, as did many governors and often powerful groups of

wide-ranging connections of this theme, they do not fully document it.

⁴⁴ J. G. Taylor, *A Short History of the Old Sinjins Lodge (No. 3232)*, Chelsea: George White 1935, pp. 5-6; Quentin Gelder, ‘School Freemasonry: “A Very English Affair”’, *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum* 110 (1997), pp. 116-44; Douglas Knoop, *University Masonic Lodges*, Sheffield: J. W. Northend 1945; M. J. Crossley Evans, ‘The University of Bristol and Freemasonry 1876-1976 with particular reference to Lodge No. 1404’, *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum* 110 (1997), pp. 163-76.

⁴⁵ John F. Nichols, *Notes on the History of the Old Sinjins Lodge No. 3232*, Battersea: E. C. Freeman 1957, p. 5.

⁴⁶ P. J. Rich, ‘Public-school Freemasonry in the Empire’ p. 177.

masters and housemasters'.⁴⁷ The school chapel was festooned with masonic symbols; in 1937, the Headmaster gave the boys a half-day's holiday at the request of the Grand Master.⁴⁸ Tyerman also notes that freemasonry was important in affirming the group interest and professional solidarity of schoolmasters.⁴⁹ This was not only the case in public schools. Dina Copelman has studied the teachers of the elementary schools run by the London School Board, which was set up in 1870.⁵⁰ The majority of these teachers were women, many of them married.⁵¹ Like their public school colleagues, the male school board teachers used freemasonry to affirm their professional and social

⁴⁷ Christopher Tyerman, *A History of Harrow School 1324-1991*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2000, pp. 362-4. In Tyerman's view, the importance of freemasonry at Harrow reflected the school's strongly Anglican and anti-catholic ethos: 'Anglicanism was important to Harrow because it formed part of its settled world view. The anti-Catholicism was partly explained by this, as was the acceptance of freemasonry which was embedded in Harrow's clerical as well as lay fabric. It would not have seemed odd for the freemason classicist J. W. Moir (master 1922-48) to urge Moore [the Headmaster] in 1947 to appoint an openly freemason clergyman to the staff. The decline in anti-Catholicism, although not paralleled by an equal decline in freemasonry, forms one of the sharpest transformations in Harrow's religious identity [since 1970]'. p. 462.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 363.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 386.

⁵⁰ Dina M. Copelman, *London's Women Teachers: Gender, Class and Feminism 1870-1930*, London: Routledge 1996.

⁵¹ In 1886, the teaching force of the London School Board comprised 2,076 men and 4,065 women: *ibid.*, p. 50.

status.⁵² In 1876, the *Crichton Lodge* was founded by a group of teachers and officials of the London School Board, including its President and Secretary, and established other lodges comprising chiefly teachers in South London.⁵³ These means of displaying middle-class credentials were not available to women teachers, and their social and professional status was more tenuous.

Copelman's study explores the borderland between the 'two spheres' and suggests that the process of social give and take between the sexes was complex. Perhaps the most interesting aspects of freemasonry and gender are those areas which confront the neat divisions of a 'two spheres' model. Late Victorian rhetoric of sexual difference portrayed women as shoppers and consumers, but the private spaces of the masonic lodge enabled men to indulge in conspicuous display. Freemasons purchased jewels of enormous value to wear in their lodges, and decorated their halls with furniture and fittings of great opulence.⁵⁴ In masonic shops such as Kennings in London they had their own department stores.⁵⁵ Similarly, philanthropy was an area in which

⁵² Unfortunately this is not discussed by Copelman, and would be a good area for further investigation.

⁵³ Appendix, Document No. 8, below

⁵⁴ See e.g. Neville Barker Cryer's various publications on the masonic halls of England and Wales and John M. Hamill, 'The Masonic Collections at the Lady Lever Art Gallery', *Journal of the History of Collections* 4 (1992), pp. 285-295.

⁵⁵ American equivalents are discussed by Mary Ann Clawson, *Constructing Brotherhood: Class, Gender and Fraternalism*,

different genders had distinct roles.⁵⁶ but masonic charitable activity could quietly cut across some of these distinctions. Above all, in the other direction, women's freemasonry provided a significant social outlet for women. Janet Burke and Margaret Jacob have argued that the Adoption enabled women, through freemasonry, to engage with the emerging civil society in the 18th century.⁵⁷ James Smith Allen and Mark Carnes have

Princeton: Princeton University Press 1989, pp. 213-4, who illustrates how lucrative these businesses could be. Firms manufacturing and selling regalia and other products did not restrict themselves to the masonic market but aimed at the whole range of fraternal organisations. For example, the firm of Toye, which eventually took over Kenning, also produced banners and badges for friendly societies and trade unions: Paul Martin, *The Trade Union Badge: Material Culture in Action*, Aldershot: Ashgate 2002, p. 131.

⁵⁶ Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes*, pp. 429-36.

⁵⁷ Janet M. Burke, 'Freemasonry, Friendship and Noblewomen: The Role of the Secret Society in Bringing Enlightenment Thought to Pre-Revolutionary Women Elites', *History of European Ideas* 10 (1989) 3, pp. 283-94; several publications by Margaret C. Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment: Freemasonry and Politics in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1991, pp. 120-142; 'Freemasonry, Women and the Paradox of the Enlightenment', in: Eleanor C. Riemer (ed.), *Women and the Enlightenment*, Women and History 9, New York: Haworth Press 1984, pp. 69-93; 'Money, Equality, Fraternity: Freemasonry and the Social Order in Eighteenth Century Europe', in: Thomas L. Haskell and Richard F. Teichgraber III (eds.), *The Culture of the Market: Historical Essays*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1993, pp. 102-35; with Janet M. Burke, 'French Freemasonry, Women and Feminist

recently documented extensive participation by women in fraternal organisations in the 19th century,⁵⁸ while *Co-Masonry*, through figures such as Annie Besant and Charlotte Despard, played a significant role in the women's suffrage movement,⁵⁹ with women masons joining suffrage marches in their regalia.⁶⁰

Race, Empire and Nationality

In the past, there has been an overemphasis on the importance of economic activity as a component of social identity. The study of gender has been one way in which scholars have demonstrated the complexity of social identity; another has been race, a further area

Scholarship', *Journal of Modern History* 68 (September 1996), pp. 513-49.

⁵⁸ Carnes, 'Secret Ritual and Manhood', pp. 81-9; James Smith Allen, 'Constructing Sisterhood: Gender in the French Masonic Movement, 1740-1940', paper at the University of Sheffield conference 'Lodges, Chapters and Orders: Fraternal Organisations and the Shaping of Gender Roles in Europe', 2002. Abstract available on-line at: www.shef.ac.uk/~crf/news/besantconf/jimabstr.htm; cf. Nord, *op. cit.*, pp. 27-8. cf. Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, New York: Simon and Shuster 2000, pp. 389-90.

⁵⁹ John Hamill and R. A. Gilbert, *op. cit.*, pp. 185-6; Daniel Ligou (ed.), *Histoire des franc-maçons en France de 1815 à nos jours*, Toulouse: Editions Privat 2000, pp. 154-8; Nord, *op. cit.*, pp. 27-28. Information about Charlotte Despard and masonic suffragette marches provided by Ann Pilcher-Dayton. See Appendix, Document No. 9, below.

⁶⁰ Ex info Ann Pilcher Dayton.

where research into freemasonry offers exciting possibilities. The best-known illustration of this is *Prince Hall freemasonry*, the form of freemasonry organised by blacks in America,⁶¹ which has been seen by scholars such as William Muraskin and Loretta Williams as significant in defining and nurturing a black middle class in America,⁶² although Williams in particular emphasises the contradiction between the universalist ideology of freemasonry and the separate segregated character of *Prince Hall masonry*.⁶³ There are many other areas in which freemasonry offers insights into ethnicity which are less well explored. Freemasonry was a major cultural component of the British Empire. The English Pro Grand Master Lord Carnarvon declared in the 1880s that 'Where the flag goes, there goes freemasonry to consolidate the Empire'.⁶⁴ The mixed race lodge offered a social venue in which coloniser and colonised mixed in the British Empire. Rudyard Kipling declared of his lodge in Lahore that 'there aint such things as infidels'

⁶¹ Hamill and Gilbert, *op. cit.*, pp. 208-9. See Appendix, Document No. 10, below.

⁶² William A. Muraskin, *Middle-Class Blacks in a White Society: Prince Hall Freemasonry in America*, Berkeley: University of California Press 1975; Loretta J. Williams, *Black Freemasonry and Middle-Class Realities*, Columbia, University of Missouri Press 1980; cf. Putnam, *op. cit.*, pp. 339, 389-91.

⁶³ Williams, *op. cit.*, pp. 128-134.

⁶⁴ A. A. Cooper, 'Freemasonry in Malawi', *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum* 103 (1990), p. 230

among the 'Brethren black an' brown'.⁶⁵ The importance of this area of research has been brilliantly demonstrated by a study by Augustus Casely-Hayford and Richard Rathbone of freemasonry in colonial Ghana.⁶⁶ This shows how 'freemasonry was amongst the bags and baggage of both formal and informal empire'.⁶⁷ It facilitated trading contacts and provided a means of signalling 'achievement, hard work, worthiness and in some cases high birth'.⁶⁸ It provided an important thread in the racial and national politics of the colony, with many members of the National Congress of West Africa being freemasons. Closely related to race is the role of freemasonry in the formation of national identity. For example, in Britain freemasonry was a powerful expression of the Hanoverian settlement,⁶⁹ while by

⁶⁵ David Gilmour, *The Long Recession: The Imperial life of Rudyard Kipling*, London: John Murray, 2002), p. 69; cf. p. 17. See Appendix Documents Nos. 11-12, below.

⁶⁶ Augustus Casely-Hayford and Richard Rathbone, 'Politics, Families and Freemasonry in the Colonial Gold Coast', in: J. F. Ade Ajayi and J. D. Y. Peel, *People and Empires in African History: Essays in Memory of Michael Crowder*, London: Longman 1992, pp. 143-60.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 156.

⁶⁹ David Stevenson, 'James Anderson (1679-1739), Man and Mason', in: Weisberger, McLeod and Morris, *op. cit.*, pp. 199-242; John Money, 'Freemasonry and the Fabric of Loyalty in Hanoverian England', in: Eckhart Helmuth (ed.), *The Transformation of Political Culture: England and Germany in the*

contrast in France it was in the 1870s one of the forces behind the development of modern French republicanism.⁷⁰

The interaction between freemasonry, race, nationality and class is powerfully illustrated by a classic study by Abner Cohen of freemasonry in Sierra Leone, which is a model of how scholarly research into freemasonry should be performed.⁷¹ Cohen found that in 1971 there were seventeen masonic lodges in Freetown, with about two thousand members, the bulk of whom were African. Most of these black masons were Creoles, descendants of the slaves emancipated between the 1780s and 1850s, a literate, highly-educated and occupationally-differentiated group, who were at first befriended but then disparaged by the British administrators. Cohen found that one in three Creoles were masons. Cohen related the Creole involvement in freemasonry to attacks on Creole power during the period from 1947. He concluded that 'Largely without any conscious policy or design, Freemasonic rituals and organisation helped articulate an informal organisation,

late Eighteenth Century, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1990, pp. 235-74.

⁷⁰ Avner Halpern, *The Democratisation of France 1840-1901: Sociabilité, Freemasonry and Radicalism*, London: Minerva Press 1999; Nord, *op. cit.*, pp. 15-30.

⁷¹ Abner Cohen, 'The Politics of Ritual Secrecy', *Man* 6 (September 1971), pp. 427-48, reprinted in Edward A. Tiryakian, *On the Margin of the Visible: Sociology, the Esoteric and the Occult*, New York: John Wiley 1974, pp. 111-139.

which helped the Creoles to protect their position in the face of political threat'.⁷²

Social Networks

Cohen's study raises one final important theme, that of social networks. As scholars have increasingly explored the pluralistic nature of social identity, the importance of the analysis of social networks has become evident. Factors such as the extent to which everybody knows everyone else ('reachability'), the different ways in which people are linked ('multiplexity') and the obligations placed by networks on their members ('intensity') are essential in understanding local societies, and freemasonry and other fraternal groups have a major effect on these dynamics.⁷³ The masonic archive is rich in material for investigating social networks, not only in such obvious sources as membership lists but also in petitions and correspondence, where in discussing the need for a lodge its social connections may be described. For example, a letter from a lodge formed by working men in Stratford in East London, protesting against a decision of the English Grand Lodge that it was a spurious masonic body, contains the following unusually explicit statement of the advantages of freemasonry for the Victorian artisan: 'Stratford and its neighbourhood contains a population of some thousands of skilled

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 129.

⁷³ Alisdair Rogers and Steven Verkovec, Introduction to *op. cit.*, pp. 15-21.

mechanics, artisans and engineers, many of whom from their superior attainment or from the exigencies of trade are called upon to pursue their avocation in the various states of continental Europe or in our own colonial possessions and to whom therefore the advantages arising from Masonic Fraternity are of great consequence.⁷⁴

The exciting potential of an approach which examines the interaction between freemasonry and other social networks, such as professional contacts and membership of other fraternal organisations, has been recently demonstrated by two outstanding articles concerned with two very different professions. Simon McVeigh's study of freemasonry and musical life in 18th-century London has shown how freemasonry assisted in securing patronage and work for musicians and also supported professional alliances, sometimes in surprising ways.⁷⁵ Roger Burt's study of Cornish freemasonry in the 19th century reaches some intriguing conclusions about the social composition of masonic lodges in south-west England.⁷⁶ He found that 'the lodges were dominated by the mostly young (most initiates were aged under 30) middle-class and "petit bourgeois" groups of mercantile and manufacturing

interests, professionals and small business operatives.'⁷⁷ The Cornish membership records reflect the increasing mobility of this social group, and freemasonry may have helped build international contacts facilitating profitable employment abroad.

Conclusions

Research into freemasonry explores the interconnections between such major themes of modern scholarship as public space, gender, race and social networks. These themes essentially all revolve around one major issue, the construction of social identity, and the study of freemasonry, because it concerns an identity which is both public and concealed at the same time, provides a unique perspective on this issue. Methodologically, the study of freemasonry presents many challenges, but the point that should be noted here is its inherently interdisciplinary character. The nature of the masonic archive means that the researcher into freemasonry must use many different types of media: texts ranging from membership lists to rituals, jewels, banners, engravings, music and artefacts of many different kinds.⁷⁸ The interpretation of such materials requires a blend of scholarly skills. Mark Carnes noted how his researches

⁷⁴ See Appendix, Document No. 13, below.

⁷⁵ Simon McVeigh, 'Freemasonry and Musical Life in London in the late Eighteenth Century', in: David Wyn Jones (ed.), *Music in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, Aldershot: Ashgate 2000, pp. 72-100.

⁷⁶ Roger Burt, 'Freemasonry and Socio-Economic Networking during the Victorian Period', *Archives* 27 (2002), pp. 31-8.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

⁷⁸ For an impression of a characteristic range of material see for example John M. Hamill, 'The Masonic Collections at the Lady Lever Art Gallery', *Journal of the History of Collections* 4 (1992), pp. 285-295.

required 'excursions into the fields of religious history and theology, child rearing and developmental psychology, women's history and gender studies, and structural and cultural anthropology'.⁷⁹ While scholars frequently aspire towards interdisciplinarity, they rarely achieve it. The study of freemasonry may perhaps provide a model for interdisciplinary studies.

The themes I have discussed are at the forefront of research in the humanities and social sciences, but their roots lie in old thought, reflecting both the social changes of the 1960s, and particularly the response to the French événements of 1968,⁸⁰ and the challenge posed to Marxist models by the collapse of the Soviet Union. While the study of freemasonry can contribute a great deal to these intellectual concerns, even more exciting is the question of how it helped fashion completely new intellectual agendas. Will the events of 11 September 2001 have as big an impact on the intellectual world order as those of May 1968? It is too early to say, but there are hints that, whatever the upshot, reactions to freemasonry will be of new significance. The way in which the destruction of the World Trade Centre gave rise paradoxically to a new form of anti-semitism has

been well documented.⁸¹ There has been little discussion of the new anti-masonry. Within days of the attacks in New York, website postings attributed the attacks to the *illuminati*, drew parallels between the Twin Towers and the masonic columns *Jachin* and *Boaz*, and used spurious numerology to suggest masonic involvement in the attacks.⁸² This is deplorable, but perhaps not surprising. More significant for the long-term is the way in which attacks on masonry form part of the extreme Muslim denunciation of western values. There has been a long history of Arab groups circulating the discredited libels of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. In recent years, however, some Muslims, drawing on western anti-masonic literature, have linked freemasonry with the

⁸¹ See for example: www.adl.org/Anti_semitism/speech.asp; www.time.com/time/europe/magazine/2002/0617/antisemitism/arab.html.

⁸² See for example www.texemarrs.com/122001/unleashing_king_of_terrors.htm; www.theforbiddenknowledge.com/wtc/index02.htm; www.goroadachi.com/etemenanki/mysterybabylon.htm; www.cuttingedge.org/news/n1538.cfm; www.passitkit.com/coincidence_or_conspiracy.htm; www.rense.com/general15/whoweneedfear.htm; www.dccsa.com/greatjoy/Barry.htm. This material changes frequently and can easily disappear. It urgently requires scholarly listing and analysis. See further Appendix, Documents No. 14 A-B, below. On the whole, this new twist to anti-masonry is not yet discussed by web sites devoted to documenting and analysing attacks on masonry, such as the excellent site maintained by the Grand Lodge of British Columbia: <http://freemasonry.bcy.ca/anti-masonry/>

⁷⁹ *Secret Ritual and Manhood*, p. ix.

⁸⁰ cf. Peter Starr, *Logics of Failed Revolt: French Theory After May '68*, Stanford: Stanford University Press 1995.

figure of *Dajjal*, the anti-christ.⁸³ These ideas were first developed in 1987 by the Egyptian writer, Sa'id Ayyub.⁸⁴ In Britain, a key figure in elaborating and popularising these ideas has been David Musa Pidcock, a Sheffield machinery consultant who became a Muslim in 1975 and is the leader of the Islamic Party of Britain.⁸⁵ The idea that freemasons worship *dajjal* has become widespread in Muslim communities in England and

⁸³ See for example <http://antimasons.8m.com>; www.allaahuakbar.net/free-masons/dajjal.htm; http://johnw.host.sk/articles/islam_pillars/dajjal.htm; www.trosch.org/bks/muslim_on_freemasonry.html; <http://news.stcom.net/article.php?sid=1295>; <http://openyourmind.jeeran.com/dajjal.htm>.

⁸⁴ David Cook, 'Muslim Fears of the Year 2000', *Middle East Quarterly* 5 (June 1998): available online at: www.meforum.org/article/397.

⁸⁵ David Misa Pidcock, *Satanic Voices Ancient and Modern*, Mustaqim: Islamic Art and Literature 1992; www.islamicparty.com/people/david.htm. Pidcock's book draws on the familiar anti-semitic and anti-masonic sources on western anti-masonry - his acknowledgements include a special note of gratitude to Nesta Webster and the bibliography includes Holocaust denial literature such as the 1979 pamphlet *Six Million Reconsidered*. What is distinctive about Pidcock's book is the way in which these commonplace sources are grafted onto current issues of Islamic concern, such as the Salman Rushdie affair. Pidcock declares (p. 15) that 'Many well researched books have been written by Western writers and journalists exposing the secrets of freemasonry, but to my knowledge none have attempted to seriously use material from Islamic sources in order to reach a better understanding of the subject'. On this basis, Pidcock can legitimately claim to have added a new (and disturbing) thread to the literature of anti-masonry.

elsewhere. In recent months, Islamic websites have carried enthusiastic reviews of an audio-tape called *Shadows*, produced by a London company, Hallaqah Media, which argues that freemasons created the new world order and are the servants of *dajjal*.⁸⁶ If we are at the beginning of a struggle to protect and restate the secular values of the Enlightenment,⁸⁷ it is inevitable that the study of freemasonry, so much bound up with the creation of those values, will become of new relevance.

Prof.dr. Andrew Prescott studied history at the University of London and was appointed as a curator in the Department of Manuscripts in the British Library in 1979. He is on a three year secondment from the British Library to the University of Sheffield, where he is Director of the new Centre for Research into Freemasonry, the first such centre to be established in a British university.

Appendix: Illustrative Documents

⁸⁶ www.islam-online.net/English/ArtCulture/2001/04/article1.shtml; <http://isnet.itb.ac.id/KAMMI/Sept98/msg00030.html>; www.halaqahmedia.com/pages/products/index.php. See further Appendix Documents No. 15 A-B, below.

⁸⁷ cf. Pidcock, *op. cit.*, p. 106, which notes the use of the term 'Enlightenment' by Tom Stoppard and Salman Rushdie, and (following Nesta Webster) links it back, by means of the *Illuminati*, to revolts against Islam by the Karmathites, Druse, Assassins, etc.

1. The Initiation of Lord Brougham

This description of the spur-of-the-moment decision of Lord Brougham, the English legal and social reformer, to be initiated in the Stornoway Lodge in the Western Isles of Scotland in 1799 encapsulates many of the issues of masonic biography. Was Brougham's initiation a passing incident, a merry holiday event, or did he engage more fundamentally with the values of freemasonry? If the latter, in what way? This extract is taken from the English masonic journal, The Freemasons' Quarterly Review, 2 (1835), p. 24:

‘It is not, perhaps, generally known that the late Lord Chancellor of England is a Brother of the Craft. He was originally initiated in the small town of Stornaway in Scotland, and afterwards became a member of the Canongate Kilwinning Lodge, Edinburgh, of which many other men of celebrity were members. The circumstances of his initiation were these.

Being upon a pleasure-voyage along the north coast of Scotland in company with several other roving and congenial spirits, the party put in to the hypoborean port of Stornaway, where they landed, and, as was their wont, disembarked along with them their choice store of the jolly god. It happened one evening during their convivial enjoyments, that there was a meeting of a lodge at the place, and one of the party, who was a mason, being informed of the circumstance, immediately proposed that Henry Brougham and another of the party

should go and get made without delay. No sooner said than done, and away they sallied to the lodge of Stornoway, where the future lord chancellor was duly entered, passed, and raised a Master Mason of the ancient fraternity of the Craft. As may be imagined on such an occasion -; “In such a place as that, at such an hour,” great, glorious and generous was “The feast of reason and the flow of soul;” and many a bona fide bumper of Glenlivet was quaffed to many a masonic and convivial toast.

Such were the circumstances of the initiation of the present Lord Brougham and Vaux, which are vouched for upon the authority of the respectable brother, now living, who was then secretary of the lodge.’

2. The New Welcome Lodge No. 5139

Petitions for the formation of new lodges and accompanying correspondence frequently shed light on the social motivation of freemasons. One such series of letters concerns the formation of the New Welcome Lodge No. 5139 in 1929. This lodge was formed at the suggestion of the then Prince of Wales, afterwards Edward VIII, specifically for Labour Party MPs and officials. The following extract is from a memorandum by Sir Percy Rockliff, a trade union and friendly society official, who took a leading part in establishing the lodge. It expresses a secondary aim of the new lodge, namely to provide a ‘New Welcome’ to working class

men who, it was felt, had not been able to afford to become freemasons. The initial intention that the lodge should be exclusively for Labour Party members and the involvement of the Prince of Wales in establishing the lodge are not explicitly mentioned in the correspondence, but were only recorded by Rockliff some years later. At this stage it was intended that the lodge should be called 'the Lodge of Citizenship'. The name 'New Welcome' was adopted later at the suggestion of the Prince of Wales. The document is among the Petitions in the Library and Museum of Freemasonry, Freemasons' Hall, London.

‘The idea underlying the formation of the proposed lodge is to bring home to the industrial section of the community the principles and tenets of the craft.

It is doubtless true that, in rural areas, social barriers are to some extent broken down in certain lodges which exist in those areas. But, as regards the great centres of population, the same position can hardly be said to obtain.

It is recognised that a lodge of the character proposed, if centred in London, would be to some extent localised as regards the area from which it could draw recruits without involving its members in substantial travelling expenses. It has, however, been shown by the Epworth Lodge, for example, that offshoots into the provinces of a successful lodge, having a definite purpose, are both possible and popular; and this is anticipated as regards the Lodge of Citizenship.

The type of recruits to masonry which it would be the aim of the new lodge to attract are persons who, by permeating the ranks of the industrial classes, would become missionaries for and exemplars of the advantages which masonry confers, not only upon its members, but upon those with whom its members come into daily contact – “So that when a man is said to be a mason the world may know, etc.”

It is believed that such recruits will be obtainable without importunity, given the opportunity now sought to be presented to them.

Moreover, it is strongly felt by the promoters, that masonry would exercise a steadying influence (“as citizens of the world”) upon those who are brought within its fold, and help to render nugatory any unsettling influences which might be at work in factories and elsewhere.

The men who compose the main membership of the army and navy lodges belong to the industrial classes, and they have taken an oath of fealty.

It is hoped to imbue their civilian colleagues with the same spirit of fealty through the medium of the Lodge of Citizenship.’

3. A Masonic Dispute in a Small Town

In the 18th and 19th centuries, masonic lodges were an important part of life in small towns like Monmouth on the Welsh borders. During the 1820s, Monmouth was

riven by ferocious factional disputes over reform of the town government. This controversy affected the local lodge, the Royal Augustus Lodge No. 656, and at one point the lodge was suspended by the Grand Master, the Duke of Sussex. When the suspension of the lodge was lifted, the news was greeted by the ringing of the church bells, as the following letter, dated 1 July 1821, by the Master of the lodge, Trevor Philpotts, to the Grand Secretaries White and Harper in London, describes. The letter is preserved among the returns for the lodge in the Library and Museum of Freemasonry, Freemasons' Hall, London.

'I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your favor of the 29th ult. removing the suspension from the Royal Augustus Lodge, for which I, the officers and brethren return our best and grateful thanks. A circumstance occurred in the town yesterday in consequence of this event, which it may not be improper to mention, as it may possibly be represented by some to the prejudice of the lodge. On receiving your official letter I sent to inform the officers of the lodge of the circumstance, as they and many of the brethren were waiting in much suspense, to know whether they could attend as a Lodge the approaching ceremony of dedicating the Newport Lodge. The information spread over the town immediately, and in the course of the evening some persons wholly unconnected with the lodge and masonry, ordered the ringers to ring the church bells. Immediately on learning what was intended I sent the Tyler to forbid

any ringing or any other demonstration of public feeling whatever, which it was in my power to prevent, and he accordingly did so, and stated it was the particular wish and request of the whole lodge that no ringing should take place on account of the lodge. The reply was that they had nothing to do with the lodge, but were ordered to ring by some of the principal inhabitants of the town, and would go on. I then went some of the principal inhabitants of the lodge and begged they would interfere to prevent it, and they did so by my particular request.

Independent of the admonition conveyed in your letter to avoid any proceeding which might not be in unison with the pledge given by the lodge I had a particular objection to any public expression of feeling on such a subject and occasion; which I several times distinctly mentioned at the time. I only mention this trivial matter to guard against any attempt which may hereafter be made to the disparagement of the lodge as necessary.'

4. A Masonic Parade in Sheffield

The following document is from the archives of the Sheffield Canal Company in the Public Record Office, London, RAIL 867/4. It comprises extracts from the minutes of the two oldest Sheffield masonic lodges, the Britannia Lodge No. 139 and the Royal Brunswick Lodge No. 296. They describe the ceremonies which accompanied the opening of the canal in 1819, which

provided this inland industrial city's first link to the sea. These extracts have been mounted and were apparently framed for display, presumably in the board room of the canal company.

‘Royal Brunswick Lodge No. 527

Lodge of Emergency February 22 1819 for the opening and going by procession from the canal, having obtained a dispensation.

The Lodge was opened in the first degree at 11 o'clock and proceeded to join the procession at the basin at 12 o'clock. The vessels having entered the basin, the procession then marched in good order round the town, and divided before the “Tontine” at 4 o'clock. The lodge then dined at Bro. Hardwicks at 2/6d for dinner and malt liquor etc., and closed in harmony.

J. Cawood Secretary

J. Smith Worshipful Master

Brothers present:

J. Smith, M.; G. Mosley S.W.; G. Holden, J.W. J. Fox, S.D.; T. Fox, J.D.; Cawood, Sec.; M. Hunter, T.; String, P.M.; Booth; Grundy; Hufton; Hinchcliffe; Jackson; Pickford; Wardley; Cooke; Ryals; Norman; Ashmere; Waring; Worstenholm; White; Best; Greenwood; Hawke; Jenkinson; Matthews; Rodgers; Whitley; J. Hall; Redfearn; Mather; Heald; White; Hardwicke.

Opened on the Third Degree and raised W. Heald and Greenwood.’

‘[Britannia Lodge]

Extra Lodge 22 February 1819

On this day the canal communicating from Tinsley to Sheffield was opened by a procession of masons of both lodges and the committee and subscribers to the canal and the other societies held in Sheffield.

The order of the Britannia Lodge procession was as follows:

Two Tylers with swords;

Junior Brethren two and two;

In the midst of them the flag of the Britannia Lodge carried by Bro. Stones;

Visiting brethren from the Friendly Lodge, Barnsley, two and two;

A pair of globes carried by Brother Stevenson and Brother Simpson;

Visiting Brethren from the Phoenix Lodge, Rotherham, two and two;

The Book of Constitutions carried by Brother Greenwood;

Two Stewards with wands;

The Senior Members of the Britannia Lodge;

Two Stewards with wands;

The Senior and Junior Wardens of the Britannia Lodge With their Pillars and Jewels;

Two Stewards with Wands;

The Lodge carried by Brother Haywood;

The Master of the Lodge with his Jewels;

Two Stewards;

The Past Master of the Lodge;
Two Tylers closed the procession.

After the procession thirty seven of the brothers dined together at Brother Will. Willeys and spent the day together in harmony and brotherly love cultivating that friendship which ought at all times to characterise masons.

The procession moved from the canal basin about 3 o'clock in the afternoon and proceeded through Barn Street, Castle Street, Angel Street, High Street, Far Gate, Barker Pool, Division Street, Carver Street, Sheffield Moor, Pinstone Lane, Norfolk Street, Market Street, Bull Stake to opposite the Tontine Inn, where the masons opened and the Tylers brought through the whole of the clubs who took their respective roads to where they were held and the Brunswick Lodge to Brother Thomas Hardwicks where it is held, the Britannia Lodge accompanied by the band of the Sheffield Local Militia proceeded to Brother Willeys, where they closed the Lodge and deposited the jewels and treasures thereof in their proper situations. Previous to going to the basin the lodge was opened and arranged in the lodge room at Brother Willeys in the Wicker.

Thus ended the opening of the first line of canal ever brought to Sheffield; may it long continue to flourish and its promoters and subscribers long enjoy the fruits of their capital and industry.

The committee consisting of the following persons joined the procession namely, Hugh Parker Esq., Woodthorpe, their Chairman, Bery Taylor esq.,

Brightside, William Smith, Francis Smith, Edward Nanson, jnr., John Sorby, esq., and many others and on this memorable day ten vessels entered the basin among which was a steam packet.

Dinners were served for a large body of the subscribers and gentlemen around at the Tontine Inn, the Angel, the George, the King's Head, and many other houses and it was a day of general rejoicing for seldom if ever were there such a large concourse of people assembled together.

William Rowley, Master of the Britannia Lodge No. 232 Sheffield 22 February 1819.'

5. Opening of the Covent Garden Theatre

In great cities such as London and Edinburgh, masonic ceremonies for the laying of foundation stones could be very imposing, as can be seen from the following description in William Preston's Illustrations of Masonry (1812 ed.) pp. 392-8, of the Prince Regent laying the foundation stone of the Covent Garden Theatre, on the site of the present Royal Opera House.

'On the 31st of December 1809, the foundation-stone of Covent Garden Theatre was laid by his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, as Grand Master-mason of England and Scotland. The foundation-stone was situated at the north-east angle of the ground, in weight nearly three

tons, and containing sixty cubic feet. Previous to the ceremony, it hung, suspended by cordage, over a basement-stone. Near to it was placed a marquee for the Prince. Two extensive covered galleries were erected, one to receive the body of freemasons who assisted at the ceremony; the other was appropriated to the spectators. Surrounding scaffolds were covered with many hundreds of workmen, who were engaged in the building. A detachment of the first regiment of guards was posted, as a guard of honour, at the Prince's entrance, with a band of music, and four other military bands were stationed on elevated platforms, near the company, to enliven the scene.

At twelve o'clock the Grand Lodge was opened at Freemasons Hall, in Great Queen Street, Charles Marsh esq. in the chair, attended by the Masters and Wardens of the regular lodges; and at half-past twelve they walked in procession to Bow Street, the junior lodges first. The representative of the Grand Master walked last, being preceded by the Chevalier Ruspini, bearing the Grand Sword, and by the Master of the Lodge of Antiquity, No. 1. bearing the Book of Constitutions.

On their arrival at the theatre, they were welcomed to the places assigned them, by the band playing the old tune of "A Free and an Accepted Mason". The Grand Officers proceeded to the marquee, and were arranged in order. The Master, Wardens, and nine members of the Steward's Lodge, and nearly four hundred Masters and Wardens of lodges attended,

habited in the insignia of the Order. The several bands played, alternately, airs till one o'clock, the hour fixed for the appearance of the Prince; when his Royal Highness in his coach, accompanied by the Duke of Sussex, attended by General Hulse and Colonels McMahon and Bloomfield, arrived under an escort of horse guards. His Royal Highness was received, on his entrance at the Bow Street door, by the Earl of Moira, Acting Grand Master, the detachments of guards saluting, with grounded colours, and beating the grenadiers march. Mr. Harris and Mr. Kemble, after paying their respects to his Royal Highness, ushered him to the marquee, where his arrival was announced by loud plaudits, the royal standard hoisted, and the discharge of a royal salute of artillery. His Royal Highness, who was dressed in blue, with a scarlet collar, wearing the insignia of his office as Grand Master, a pair of gold compasses set with brilliants and other jewellery, and a white apron bordered with purple, and fringed with gold, appeared in high health and spirits. Proceeding, uncovered, with his suit, through a railed platform spread with superfine broad green cloth bound with scarlet and yellow, forty dismounted life-guardsmen, who were masons, without arms, lining the sides of the railing, the company all rose as his Royal Highness passed the platform to the marquee, and gave him three cheers, when the united bands immediately struck up "God save the King." His Royal Highness, as he passed, smilingly bowed to the ladies with the most fascinating affability.

The Grand Officers had previously placed the masonic instruments on a table in the marquee. A plan of the building, with its sections and elevations, was now presented to his Royal Highness, by Robert Smirke, sen. esq. the architect; and a gilt silver trowel by Mr. Copeland, the builder of the edifice. Having paused a short time in conversation with the proprietors, and with the Grand Masonic Officers in the marquee, his Royal Highness proceeded to the ceremonial. On a signal given, the corner-stone was raised about four feet; the hod-men, in white aprons, instantly conveyed the necessary quantity of fine cementing mortar, which was neatly spread on the base-stone by the workmen of the building, similarly dressed. His Royal Highness now advanced, uncovered, to the north-east corner of the stone; when John Bayford esq., as Grand Treasurer, deposited, in a space cut for it in the basement-stone, a brass box, containing the British gold, silver, and copper coins of the present reign. On a part of the stone was, “Long live George Prince of Wales,” and “To the King,” with a medallion of the Prince. There were also deposited two large medals, one of bronze, bearing a head of his Royal Highness on one side, and on the other, the following inscription:

GEORGIUS PRINCEPS WALLIARUM
THEATRI REGIIS INSTAURANDI AUSPICIIS
IN HORTIS BENEDICTINOS LONDINI.
FUNDAMENTA SUA MANU LOCAVIT
MDCCCVIII.

The other medal, engraven in copper, bore, on one side, this inscription:

Under the Auspices of His Most Sacred Majesty
GEORGE III King of the United Kingdoms of
Great Britain and Ireland, The Foundation Stone
of the Theatre of Covent Garden, Was laid by his
Royal Highness GEORGE PRINCE OF WALES.
MDCCCVIII. On the reverse is engraven:
ROBERT SMIRKE, Architect.

His Royal Highness now, as Grand Master, finished the adjustment of the mortar with his trowel; when the upper stone was lowered in the sling to its destined position; all the bands playing “Rule Britannia,” a discharge of artillery being fired, and the people with the most animating cheers applauding the spectacle. The junior and senior Grand Wardens, and the acting Grand Master, the Earl of Moira, now severally presented his royal highness with the Plumb, the Level, and the Square; and the Prince, having applied them to the stone, pronounced the work correct, and gave the stone three strokes with his mallet.

Three elegant silver clips were then presented, successively, to his Royal Highness, containing corn, wine, and oil, which he scattered and poured over the stone, all the bands playing “God save the King.” His Royal Highness then restored the plan of the building into the hands of the architect, approving that specimen

of his genius, and desiring him to complete the structure conformably thereto. Then graciously turning to Mr. Harris and Mr. Kemble, he wished prosperity to the building and the objects connected with it, and success and happiness to its proprietors and managers.

The ceremony being finished, the band played “Rule Britannia;” and the Prince, the Duke of Sussex, and the Earl of Moira, were escorted back to the Prince’s carriage by the managers and the Grand Officers under a second royal salute of twenty-one guns.

Thus passed a ceremonial, which by the excellent pre-arrangement of its managers, and the gracious yet dignified manner in which the illustrious chief actor performed his part, exhibited an interesting spectacle, that excited general admiration and applause. All who had the honour to approach the Prince speak in raptures of his polite and captivating manners on the occasion. Although the neighbouring houses were covered to the roof-tops, and many thousands of people were assembled in the street, it is with great satisfaction we state that not a single accident happened to interrupt the splendid termination of the ceremony.

The Masters and Wardens of the masonic lodges then returned in procession to their hall in Great Queen Street; when the Grand Lodge was closed, after making a formal minute of the proceedings, and receiving, through the medium of the Grand Treasurer, the thanks of the Prince for the favour of their attendance.

The Brethren, after the lodge was closed, sat down to a splendid dinner at Freemasons’ Tavern; when mirth and conviviality closed the meeting.

The proprietors of Covent Garden Theatre soon afterwards received a letter from Colonel McMahon, dated from Carlton House, in which he stated, that he had it in command from his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, to express his high approbation of the very great order and regularity with which the whole arrangement of the ceremonial had been formed and conducted.’

6. Opening of the New Sheffield Masonic Hall, Surrey Street

The movement for provincial lodges to build their own halls and to cease meeting in taverns was one of the most important trends in English freemasonry in the second half of the 19th century. These halls often formed an integral part of the development of a civic centre in many provincial towns, particularly in the North and Midlands. When the Spanish emigré physician Mariano Martin de Bartolomé arrived in Sheffield in 1839, he was scandalised to find the local masonic lodges meeting in a public house. He only agreed to join a masonic lodge providing it met elsewhere. The lodges eventually moved to the Sheffield Music Hall in Surrey Street, then afterwards purchased the former Savings Bank nearby, which was converted for masonic use. In 1877, the old Savings Bank was replaced by purpose-built premises.

While the exterior was austere, the interior was furnished in a very opulent style. Surrey Street was to form one of the axes of the new city centre of Sheffield, and is close to the city hall, the public library and other civic buildings. In 1967, the Sheffield masonic lodges moved to new premises in the suburbs of the city, which offered more convenient car parking - itself a significant statement about the changing social structures of the city. The following description of the opening of the new hall in Surrey Street is taken from The Freemason, 28 July 1877, p. 311:

‘The new hall fronts to Eyre-Street and Surrey-street (standing on the site of the Old Hall) it is built entirely of dressed stone, partly of that of the old building. It is in the classical style of architecture, of a neat and substantial character, the decorations being quiet, yet including the conventional square and compasses &c.; the tout ensemble, though suggestive of durability, is pleasing. The building contains a lodge room and a banqueting room, and there is a spacious cellar. The banqueting room, which is on the ground floor, is 51 feet long by 26 feet wide by 15 feet high, it is lighted by double windows of plate glass, the inner ones being ornamented with Masonic emblems embossed thereon. A serving window gives direct communication with the kitchens, which are extensive and fitted up with all modern requirements. The furniture of the banqueting room can be readily lowered into the cellar, which extends the full size of the building.

The lodge room, which is over the banqueting room, is 51 feet long by 26 feet wide by 24 feet high, having an arched room springing from a cornice running round the room, ornamented with moulded ribs and panels, and carved bosses. The walls are relieved with columns, which have foliated capitals springing from ornamented carbels, from which the ribs in the roof form one continuous line. The whole of the fittings are of polished pine, slightly stained and varnished, which produce a very pleasing effect. The east end is occupied by a dias of three steps, along the north and south sides runs a raised platform, so that a double row of chairs can be placed, enabling the brethren occupying the back seats to see and hear with comfort. At the west end is an organ, built expressly by the firm of Messrs Brindley and Foster, of Sheffield...

The appearance of the lodge room when illuminated is brilliant, and when the promised decorations have been completed there is little doubt about its being one of the most beautiful Masonic temples in the provinces. We are glad to hear that the main part of the work of an ornate nature has been reserved for the interior. Both rooms are lighted by very chaste gaseliers, and are warmed by hot water on the most improved principles; the ventilation is on Tobin's system. In addition to these two large rooms there are, on the ground floor, a club room, commodious kitchens, lavatory &c.; on the first floor, one small lodge room and a convenient cloak room; a wide passage with a broad flight of stairs lead to the lodge room; on the second floor

are several rooms, affording accommodation to a resident Tyler. The acoustic properties of all the rooms, we are happy to say, are perfect. The entrance to the hall is made through the adjoining premises, which we have already described; the arrangements are such that, at any future time, these can be pulled down and more spacious premises erected in the same style as the new hall; when this is done there will be not only spacious offices & c. necessary for the lodges, but plenty of accommodation for a club. The whole of the properties are freehold, and are owned by the Sheffield Masonic Hall Company, Limited, the shares of which are held solely by the lodges or brethren:- virtually, therefore, they are their own tenants- a move in the right direction (though it is only fair to say that it is many years since a Sheffield lodge met in a public-house), and we trust the day is not far distant when every brother will realise the fallacy of the poet's limes, where he goes on to say that he

“May sigh to think he still has found
His warmest welcome at an inn”

Tempora mutantur; today every lodge may, or should, meet under its own roof, or, at least, in a room set apart for the purpose, yet in no way connected with a public house. Practice being ever preferred to precept we feel bound to point to Sheffield as an example we would urge upon others to follow. To the true Craftsman there is nothing, in our way of thinking, so undignified as the association of a lodge with a public house...’

7. The Masonic Gentleman

The following extract is from a sermon by the Rev. J. M. Hannah, Freemasonry: Its Purpose, Practice and Profit (Liverpool: W. J. Cochrane 1907), which was preached before the Royal Victoria Lodge No. 1013 at a special service in Holy Trinity church, Wavertree, on 6 June 1907, in aid of the chapter house of the new Liverpool Cathedral, the building of which was financed by the West Lancashire Province. It illustrates how masonic sermons and speeches are a rich source of information about the ideology of gender relations in provincial towns.

‘Freemasonry is concerned with building, not with banqueting as one so often hears. If any one of the gentler sex here present has received such an impression from a mason, be he husband or friend, be assured he is no ideal mason. It is true we have a feast, a love feast: it is one of the essential parts of our meetings. We unite around the supper-table in the bond of brotherly love, and I am betraying no secret when I tell you that at a fixed hour we stand and dispatch a telepathic communication throughout the world; we extend our girdle of friendship round the globe, and unite in a solemn cry to the “Eternal Father strong to save”. Our feast is a solemn symbol meant - like everything else in Freemasonry – “represent some great principle and to

body it forth” May the blush of shame never cease to rise upon the face of those who give the wrong impression of our love-feast. I am glad to testify in public that I have received nothing but good from Freemasonry, and nothing but good from the men of my Lodge. The true Mason is always a gentleman, always dignified in his demeanour, always looking behind the visible symbol to the great principle involved.’

8. Petition for the Crichton Lodge No. 1641

This extract again illustrates the importance as historical sources of the correspondence and supporting documentation accompanying petitions for new lodges, preserved in the Library and Museum of Freemasonry at Freemasons’ Hall in London. This memorial concerns a petition for the establishment of Crichton Lodge No. 1641, dated 13 June 1876, which was associated with the new London School Board. Signatories to the petition included the Superintendent of the London School Board, who became the first Master of the lodge, the clerk to the School Board, and four schoolmasters. The Surrey Masonic Hall referred to in the petition was a recently opened hall intended to provide a focus for freemasonry in the newly developed suburbs of South London.

‘Petition for Proposed Crichton Lodge.

The brethren presenting this petition beg most respectfully to represent to the Most Worshipful Grand Master.

1. That they are associated either professionally or sympathetically with the work of Education, and that they have been led to meet at Camberwell for consultations and as members of committees and otherwise. Finding so many masons amongst themselves and worthy men desirous of becoming masons, united with them in common educational efforts, they have determined to ask for a warrant to meet at the Surrey Masonic Hall.
2. The Surrey Masonic Hall has recently been built and opened by brethren desirous of promoting freemasonry. The hall is conveniently situated near a railway station by means of which members can easily reach their homes after lodge to all parts of the metropolis and suburbs, and even to considerable distances on the Great Trunk line, with which the local station is connected by traffic arrangements.
3. The lodges already meeting at the Surrey Masonic Hall are not local to Camberwell, but contain members from all parts of London, and some of the lodges already number a sufficient proportion of brethren.
4. The petitioners do not propose to retire from their present lodges but they are very desirous of avoiding the necessity of meeting at a tavern, and they are therefore desirous of meeting at a masonic hall.
5. The petition has received the recommendation of the officers of the Surrey Masonic Hall lodge No. 1529, but

from causes over which the petitioners have no control it has been found physically impossible to obtain the signature of one of the officers. The officers of the MacDonald Lodge No. 1216 (the lodge meeting nearest the hall) have assented to the favourable consideration of this petition.'

9. Co-Masonry

Co-Masonry is a form of freemasonry which admits both men and women. It was established by Maria Deraismes and George Martin in France at the end of the 19th century. The most energetic early promoter of Co-Masonry in England was the trade unionist, feminist and theosophist Annie Besant. The following article from The Co-Mason 3 (January 1911), p. 4, was written by Ursula Bright, a close associate of Besant and a campaigner for women's rights.

'Co-Masonry is the latest development of two great ideas - the religious and the political - I had almost said the feminist - for the emancipation of women includes all politics. Our S[upreme] C[ouncil] in Paris makes the complete equality of women and men, in every department of human life, its chief object.

In religion Co-Masonry realises that the Brotherhood is to be the distinguishing mark of the spiritual movement of the future.

It is true that male masonry proclaims the brotherhood of half the race, but even here we find that the maimed, the halt and the blind, as well as the whole sisterhood of humanity, is shut out.

Those amongst us most entitled to brotherly consideration and sympathy are deliberately excluded. Male masonry is the expression of power, wealth, social influence and exclusiveness. Co-Masonry is the expression of service, tolerance, freedom of speech on all subjects. Masons working under the Grand Lodges of England and Scotland may not discuss, in their temples, the two subjects of deepest interest to mankind, namely religion and politics. We expect the members of our organisation to be able to speak on any subject, fit for public discussion, even when holding the most antagonistic views, with courtesy, tolerance and good feeling and with an entire absence of hostility. Co-Masonry is spreading its branches everywhere, not only in Europe, but in India and America, and appeals are now made to us from our colonies - Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, for help to establish Co-Masonic lodges. They are beginning to realise the deep religious meaning of the ceremonial.

The motto of our S[upreme] C[ouncil] in Paris is "A La Gloire De l'Humanité". What is the glory of humanity but the development of that perfection of the ideal of the unity of interest, which will make war, and all forms of cruelty, tyranny and injustice impossible in the future? The establishment of the true brotherhood and sisterhood in mankind.'

10. Prince Hall Freemasonry in North Carolina

In 1775, the Afro-American leader Prince Hall and fourteen other blacks were initiated into freemasonry by a regimental lodge under the Irish constitution. In 1784, the English Grand Lodge gave a warrant to African Lodge No. 459 to meet in Boston. From 1797, the African Lodge started to act autonomously, eventually declaring itself independent of any Grand Lodge and, and this providing the basis for the emergence of Prince Hall masonry as an Afro-American branch of freemasonry. In 1955, Prince Hall masonry had over 300,000 members, and was a major institution of the black middle class in America. The following extract is from William Henry Grimshaw, The Official History of Freemasonry Among the Colored People in North America (New York: Broadway Publishing, 1908), pp. 258-260. It describes the reaction of the White Grand Lodge of North Carolina to the establishment of a lodge in the state by the Grand Master of Prince Hall freemasonry. Incapable of conceiving of a black grand lodge, the white masons of North Carolina assumed the new lodge had been formed by the white Grand Lodge of New York.

‘In 1865, Paul Drayton, National Grand Master [of Prince Hall freemasonry], assisted in establishing in the city of Newberne, King Solomon Lodge, No. 1, F. A. A.

M. The white Grand Lodge of North Carolina proceeded to arraign the white Grand Lodge of New York for violating its masonic jurisdiction, in the following manner:

“If the facts be true, the Grand Lodge of New York has sent an agent into the Southern States with full power to organize lodges throughout the southern portion of the country, that said Grand Lodge has no such right.

We fear that our northern brethren are in gross error as to their masonic mission to the south. Why should the mission be to the south? Why not to the negroes of the north? We fear that they are unconsciously imbued with the spirit of fanaticism; that they have unwholesome dreams that they are better than we. And we do allow ourselves to resist the conviction that we are not more devoted to the best interests of the negroes of the south than they can possibly be. They were born in our families; we have nursed them in sickness, laboured with them in the field and in the shop.

We have rejoiced with them when we had much, and suffered with them when we had little; we have protected them because they were weak, and advised them because they were ignorant.

We have made them better than Africans and nearly equal to our northern people, themselves being the judges. And, but for fanaticism, doubtless many of them would have been worthy of masonic privileges. Our earnest desire now is still further to improve their condition. We would educate them, improve their habits and manners, and make them industrious and prudent.”

Our white brethren of North Carolina really thought that Paul Drayton was a white mason, for he certainly looked like one, and hailing from New York, and the authority of a Grand Master of Masons, to do work among the negroes of the south. They had never heard of a negro Grand Lodge of masons in the world, hence the above arraignment.

The above paragraphs are remarkable as coming from a Southern source. They do not, in the abstract, question the propriety of making masons of negroes. Our ancient landmarks are, that he that be made a mason must be able in all degrees; that is, freeborn, worthy and well qualified. It is not necessary that the candidate should be a white man. We teach that in every clime and among every people where masonry has existed, and to every human being our benevolence extends. But propriety, conformity to government, and reasonable to religion and to manners and customs, have distinguished our order. Our communications are often breast to breast, mouth to ear. Fellowship in the sense of the most perfect equality, intimate relationship, and close communion, is the chief characteristic of our intercourse.

We are not disposed to criticise the above paragraph, written by my white brethren with much nicety, but that they do not question the propriety of making masons of negroes, comes with singular significance from a section of the country that, for more than half a century, has been consistent in its denunciations of the recognitions by northern Grand Lodges of colored men who had been made masons even

in foreign countries and by lawful authority. *Tempora mutantur, et nos mutantur in illis.*

The Almighty never made a slave. Slavery is a condition into which the child enters after birth - the strong taking advantage of the weak. It follows then that his restoration to freedom restores him to all his natural rights.'

11. Masonic Tales of the Raj

With organised sports and gothic architecture, freemasonry was one of the cultural forces which held together the British Empire. Masonic lodges provided an important meeting place for the expatriate British, and mixed race lodges were one of the main venues in which the colonisers mixed with the colonised. The atmosphere of British imperial freemasonry is vividly captured by a small collection of adventure stories published by H. W. B. Moreno in 1907, Freemasonry Revealed! Being a Series of Short Stories of Anglo-Indian Life Concerning Masons and Masonry. The stories are in a popular Boy's Own Paper ripping yarn style, but all centre around masonic life in India. Moreno is described on the title page as Past Master, Lodge Thomas Jones No. 2441 (EC), Past Principal Z, Royal Arch Chapter Progress No. 3054 (EC), Past District Grand Sword Bearer, District Grand Lodge of Bengal, Past District Grand Organist, District Grand Chapter of Bengal. Moreno was himself Indian. The following is the opening of his story Masonry

Defiled. A Tragic Story About Two Masons, A Maiden and A Serpent (*pp. 53-56*):

‘The Planter community at Darjeeling had organised an informal soiree at the Club, to commemorate, in some special manner, the installation of one of the popular Planters of the neighbouring, tea-growing district, as Worshipful Master of Lodge “Mount Everest”. The usual installation banquet had taken place; but as a token of appreciation, a social gathering was inaugurated, at which, the Planters, always genial hosts, were at home to their numerous friends that evening.

Several small tables lay scattered about the spacious club hall, at which sat groups of well-dressed gentlemen, some lolling back in their chairs; whilst the hum of conversation and the occasional bursts of laughter that arose, amidst the clinking of glasses and the clattering of crockery together with the wafting clouds of tobacco smoke, betokened that a merry evening was being spent. Presently, Tom Grumley - Captain Grumley as he was better known - an old Planter of the district, stepped in.

“Hello, Cap’n! Here we are again”, shouted some of the younger members as a welcome.

“Come along, Cap’n, right this way, easy, right down by this chair”, cried one of them, “now what’s your poison”.

“Brandy and Soda”, soberly replied the Captain, “and, if you don’t mind, a good, strong ‘Moulmein’?”

“Right you are”, replied another, handing the captain his cigar-case, “here are some ‘Moulmeins’, have your pick”.

The Captain selected his cigar, lit it up, poured out his peg, drank half of it down in one gulp and ejaculated: “What’s up? You fellows seem a bit quiet this evening”.

“What’s up!” cried one, “why, waiting for you to give us one of your old yarns”.

“Right oh!” shouted another, “let it go now; something nice and crisp”.

“Well”, started the Captain, dashing lightly the ash of his cigar on to the little tray which lay beside him, “I cannot forget the time, - it’s now fourteen years - when I gave up the army and with it, masonry; but on such occasions, old memories will revive, when I was a soldier and staunch mason...

Many years ago, in the early ‘70s, away in Merrie England, I joined the South Lancashires, the Royal XXXth as they were always known. Fred Knowles, who lived in the same hamlet where I came from, caught as well the fire of military glory, that was pervading England at that time, and we both joined the battalion together, taking our commissions as junior subalterns... We had not been long in the regiment, when it was drafted out to India, and we were sent right away to Delhi.

In those days we had none of the home-comforts you fellows get now; none of your brick-built houses, with a punkah going over your head, night and day; none

of your dainty English dishes, with choice wines in between - no, no, by Jove, we had to live in open bungalows, with the hot east wind to fan us to sleep, with beef and fowl in all varieties to swallow down and the wild open country around us to gaze at.

Fred and I took a place to ourselves, sharing expenses and leading idle, easy lives, with an occasional drill or two, when the heat permitted us to get about. Then they formed a military lodge, 'Lodge Union', it was styled and we joined it, working together as true and loyal masons and occupying all our leisure moments in studying the mysteries of the craft.

Things went on smoothly for a while, when an order came for the battalion to move on to Meerut...

At Meerut we found ourselves near by the Irish Fusiliers, a fine set of fellows, none of them under six feet in height, and every one of them down-right good-hearted souls. Colonel Carstairs was in charge of them and a nice old man was he, with a head as bald as a billiard ball and with a large pair of brown-dyed moustaches, but a kind and generous man withal. He assumed the Mastership of our regimental lodge at Meerut and an excellent Master he made, for his very appearance commanded respect. And he had an only daughter - by Gad, the loveliest girl in the land..."

12. The Indian Freemason's Friend

The various masonic periodicals which appeared with increasing profusion are a rich source of information about masonic culture and ideology in the 19th century. The following extracts from The Indian Freemason's Friend, 3 (1863), pp. 155-60, illustrate how freemasonry acted as a force for Anglicisation in India.

'The foundation-stone of The Presbyterian Church at Allahabad being about to be laid, a copy of the *Indian Freemason's Friend* (old series), containing an account of the laying of the foundation-stone of St Andrew's Kirk, Calcutta, has been sent to the Chaplain. The foundation-stone of St Andrew's Kirk was laid by the Provincial Grand Master of Bengal, Sir Archibald Seton - Lord Moira being at that time Grgand Master of India...

On the 1st April, the Provincial Grand Master paid a visit to the Lodge *Anchor and Hope*, at Howrah, and received the compliment of being elected an Honorary Member. The lodge now meets in what is called the Ice House (in which there is no ice), and occupies rooms more spacious than those of the Freemasons' Hall in Cossitollah...

For the first time, to the best of our knowledge, a Parsee has become Master of a lodge in the Province of Bengal. W. Bro. Nanabhoy Burjorjee, the present master of Lodge *Star of Burmah*, No. 897, Rangoon, was employed under our late Provincial Junior Grand Warden, R. W. Bro. Peter Anderson, in 1856 and 1857; and he then felt an anxious desire to become a mason. In June 1858, he was initiated in the Rangoon Lodge; in

December of the same year, previously to proceeding to Bombay, he was passed to the Second Degree in Calcutta, in Lodge *Industry and Perseverance*, No. 126; and in June 1859, he was raised to the Third Degree at Rangoon. He was shortly after appointed Secretary of lodge *Star of Burmah* by W. Bro. Dr. Dickinson; and in the following year, he also officiated for the Treasurer, W. Bro. Jordan, who had proceeded to Ava. In 1861 and 1862 he filled the offices of Senior Deacon and Junior Warden; and in the middle of the latter year he was promoted to the western chair, - the Senior Warden, Bro. Bulloch, having left India for England. On the 8th December 1862, he was raised by the suffrages of the brethren to the eastern chair; and on the 5th January, he was installed by a Board of Past Masters, consisting of Bros. Newmarch, Dickinson and McPhail.'

13. A Working Class Lodge in the East End of London

Many French refugees who fled to London after Napoleon III's coup in 1851 were masons, but found the cost of English freemasonry prohibitive and its meetings unsatisfactory, so they joined instead an illicit lodge known as the Grand Loge des Philadelphes. The Philadelphes established lodges for working-class Englishmen at Stratford and Woolwich in the London area, both well-known centres of radical activity. The English Grand Lodge received a complaint about the

Stratford lodge, known as Equality Lodge, and circulated its members warning them not to associate with any lodges connected with the Philadelphes. This prompted the following protest from Equality Lodge to the English Grand Lodge, dated 4 December 1859, which is remarkable not only for its denunciation of English freemasonry but also for its explanation of why working men might want to become masons. The original letter is preserved on the Rite of Memphis subject file in the Library and Museum of Freemasonry, Freemasons' Hall, London.

'As it appears from a circular issued by the "Board of General Purposes" addressed to the masonic body in England, that great misconception exists in the minds of the members of that board as to the real objects and character of the brethren comprising the Equality Lodge at Stratford we are instructed by the WM and Council of the Lodge to forward to you for the information of the Board such facts as may be useful to make known at the Quarterly Communication. In the first place, Stratford and its neighbourhood contains a population of some thousands of skilled mechanics, artisans and engineers, many of whom from their superior attainment or from the exigencies of trade are called upon to pursue their avocation in the various states of continental Europe or in our own colonial possessions and to whom therefore the advantages arising from masonic fraternity are of great consequence. A desire therefore has long existed for the erection of a masonic temple in this district and one or

two abortive attempts have been made for this purpose by brethren in connection with your Grand Lodge, the failure arising chiefly from the large sums necessary for initiations and raisings. The matter would probably have rested here, had it not happened some eighteen months since that several parties now brethren of this lodge were brought into communication with a number of foreign brothers meeting in London and holding a warrant from the “Grand Empire of Memphis”. After several conferences and much consideration our present Temple was opened and consecrated on the last festival of St John and its labours have been conducted from that period with a success beyond previous anticipation. The works are opened, carried on and closed, with all the formula, decorum and as we trust the true spirit of masonry, which as we have been taught is like christianity, universal in its application, in its language and its aims, and recognises no distinction of creed or country.

We feel honoured therefore by our association with those intellectual and honourable men to whom we owe our existence as a body, we sympathise with their misfortunes, and regret the causes from their native land. Are you surprised therefore that we repudiate the epithet of *spurious* when applied to us? We hold the *spurious* to be him who forgetful of the solemn obligations he has undertaken, turns his back upon a brother, or by his conduct brings disgrace upon a time honoured Institution. It is untrue that either political or religious matters find any place in our work or our discussions.

We may not be orthodox; we may have transgressed against the rules of an establishment, and the doors of the Temples of that establishment may be closed against us; We regret it! but we shall not retaliate; our works are open to the inspection of every true brother and the records of our labours to that of every qualified officer. We have to apologise for troubling you but we have felt it due to ourselves as Englishmen to defend ourselves from unjust imputations, as had we neglected to do so, we should have forfeited our dignity of character as masons.

“We have spoken truth! Judge ye”^c

14A-B. September 11th: The New Anti-Masonry

As is well-known, the events of 11 September 2001 were, appallingly, made the occasion for a new anti-semitism, when it was alleged (on no factual basis whatever) that the Israeli secret service had prior knowledge of the attacks on the World Trade Centre and that Israelis working there were warned of the danger. Since at least the time of The Protocols of the Elders of Zion, anti-semitism has gone hand in hand with anti-masonry, so it is not surprising that allegations that 11 September was a Zionist plot have been accompanied by suggestions that the attacks were inspired by a masonic world order. The following two abstracts are representative of the many sites on the world wide web which work out these crazed and grotesque theories at absurd length.

A. Unleashing the King of Terrors

The first anti-masonic text is by the American Evangelist Texe Marrs, a former United States Air Force officer and Professor of Aerospace Systems, who has taken a particular interest in new age philosophies.

‘In the authoritative book, *Art and Architecture of Freemasonry*, the author [James Steven Curl] says that the two columns, or pillars (Jachin and Boaz), “play a significant role” in masonic ritual and “are the medium by which the secret knowledge” is transmitted. This picture is of the two masonic pillars in the Würzburg, Germany Cathedral. Note the serpentine spirals on each pillar

Was September 11th the day the Illuminati attacked America?

We were told by our government and the media that there was an intelligence breakdown and failure.

“Mistakes” were simply made, said our President, by the FBI, CIA, INS, and other agencies.

“Mistakes?” Costing over 5,000 lives! Baloney! If there were mistakes, who has paid for them? Has even one CIA or FBI agent been punished? Has even one lost his or her job?

I have carefully and meticulously analyzed what really happened on September 11th -and in the months and years leading up to that fateful and tragic date. I am convinced that the top levels of the CIA and FBI knew in advance what was to happen.

This was no mere intelligence letdown or oversight. This bloody horror was a premeditated attack on the very foundation of the United States, an occultic event of monumental prophetic significance. Still more important, the ritualistic nightmare and suffering of September 11th must be accurately viewed by true Christians as the beginning of the cataclysmic, prophesied war against the saints, a severe deterioration of Constitutional protections once offered the American citizenry but now destined to rapidly evaporate and vanish.

What happened on September 11, 2001, was nothing less than an elaborate, carefully crafted and dynamically staged satanic ritual. I believe the tumbling down of the twin towers of the World Trade Center was a blood sacrifice. It was, in fact, a scripted holocaust, which the highest echelon of the theocratic Illuminati euphemistically labeled the “Unleashing of the King of Terrors.”

In the Unleashing of the King of Terrors a satanically energized variation of the third degree ritual of Freemasonry was staged - the Master Mason degree - in which the candidate (playing the role of Hiram Abiff, the antichrist) lying in a coffin, is raised by the strong grip of the Lion’s Paw. In the ritual, it is noted that the two pillars (towers), Jochin [*sic.*] and Boaz, have fallen and are in need of restoration.

What transpired on September 11th was a black magic ceremony intended to bring about the restoration of the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem and the raising of

its twin pillars which had fallen ("Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen" - two are fallen -see Revelation 18:2). The fall of Babylon and its twin towers, says Bible prophecy, occurs in a single hour: "She shall be utterly burned with fire... that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour is thy judgment come."

But there is more to come, for this grotesque Satanic ritual must conclude with the coming of the beast - the son of the Devil - he who was "raised" by the creature from hell on September 11, 2001. This is the long-awaited dawning of the astrological age of Saturn, the sixth planet, the New Age, with its earthly "Messiah" and its unholy New World Order.

What I am declaring here demands evidence and substantiation. And it must line up with end-time prophecies given us by our Lord and His prophets in His Holy Word. In an exclusive report I have prepared especially for friends of Power of Prophecy, I do, indeed, present this proof and biblical foundation. In the 60 minute audiotape, entitled Unleashing the King of Terrors, I fully examine the occult underpinnings of the September 11th carnage and reveal its deeply hidden esoteric and prophetic meaning.

I realize that by publishing this astonishing material I am placing myself in great jeopardy. Believe me, I have carefully weighed the cost, but the truth must be told. I am relying on the prayers of the saints to protect me. If God wills, no harm will come to me because of these exposures. But regardless, I owe it to

you and to our Lord to lay everything on the line. Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus!

B. Twin Towers = 11 + Flight 11 + September, 11th = 33

The second extract, from an anonymous website, illustrates the use of spurious numerology to support this theory. The numerological techniques of the author of the second extract are succinctly explained elsewhere on the site: 'Flight 11, 93, 175, 77 - If these numbers are broken down, 11 actually remains the same in numerology, 93 becomes 12, 175 becomes 13 and 77 becomes 14. 11, 12, 13, 14 Broken down again and you have 2 - 3 = 4 - 5. Add them all up and break them all down!'

'In Freemasonry 33 is the highest degree there is. Remember on another page I taught you one must be careful in pointing the finger at an instigator? Well, I'll point the finger right now. Certain members of the U.S. Government and the U.S. Military knew the event was going to happen because they are the ones who planned it. They worked together with **Osama bin Laden** to bring this event to pass.

Flight 11 was a Boeing 767-200. It hit the **North Tower** at 8:45 AM EST. The length of the aircraft is 159 feet and 2 inches. $1 + 5 + 9 - 2$ (planes?) = 13. The number 13 is used extensively within Freemasonry. The 33rd degree Masonic Temple is located just 13 blocks north of the White House. There are many other

instances of the number thirteen within Masonry. The Pagan mind is obsessed with numbers and symbols.

Flight 175 was also a Boeing 767-200. This aircraft hit the **South Tower**. $1 + 7 + 5 = 13$. The Twin Towers were hit with planes carrying the occult signatures of “11” and “13”, the two most important numbers in the entire occult world. The number “11” symbolizes all that is evil and imperfect [The Old World Order] and the number “13” signifies rebellion against God’s constituted authority!

It is interesting that the North Tower was hit first. In Masonic doctrine, North, is designated as the area where darkness, superstition, and ignorance dwells. Albert Pike describes this belief: *‘To all Masons, the North has immemorially been the place of darkness; of the great lights of the Lodge, none is in the North.’* [Morals and Dogma, p. 592]

The Elite Mason worships toward the East, because they are pagan Sun worshippers, hence the **Eastern Star**. Most other Masons do not even realize this. In their Lodges, the North is empty as a symbol of their belief about that direction. Why do Masons believe this way about the North? The Bible states that God sits on His throne in the north [Isaiah 14:13]. By striking the North Tower first, the Illuminist Masons guiding this world into the New World Order may have been symbolically striking at God and His system, the Old World Order!

If you tie these two understandings together, you should realize why the first aircraft designated “11” hit

the North Tower first. North is the direction of God’s throne.

We know who is behind the terrible tragedy simply by the occult Illuminist signature. **Osama bin Laden** was only carrying out part of the plan which originated from the Illuminati. If American, British, and Israeli Intelligence really wanted a man out of the way, they would get him no matter how rich or powerful or protected he might be. Osama bin Laden is alive today only because the Illuminati wants him to be alive.’

15A-B: Islamic Anti-Masonry

In 1987, the Egyptian writer Sa’id Ayyub published a book arguing that there was a link between freemasonry and dajjal, the Muslim equivalent of Anti-Christ. These theories were elaborated and popularised among the Islamic community by the English convert to Islam, David Misa Pidcock. Since the events of 11 September 2001, the idea that freemasons worship the devil has become widespread among British muslims. The following are representative samples of the large number of web postings which document this new Islamic anti-masonry.

A. Dajjal – The Anti Christ

‘I would like to inform you all of some information I have come across and feel that I must share it with all and hope and pray that we all learn a lesson from this. INSHAALLAH.

You will have heard much about DAJJAL - THE ANTI-CHRIST the Anti-Christ from the Christian and Jewish authorities. But what did The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) say about DAJJAL (The greatest Fitnah (Evil, test)) that will ever befall mankind.

When shall DAJJAL appear? Most of the signs prevalent before the coming of DAJJAL can now be observed. One thing though is for certain, if you are fortunate enough not to witness the Anti-Christ, then your children certainly shall. Before the Anti-Christ shall appear we have been told there shall be a SYSTEM, a DAJJAL- system, that is up and running, that shall await his arrival. This DAJJAL-system, will be the most evil and most corrupt satanic, kaafir force in history.

This system shall promote mass immorality (Homosexuality, Adultery, Fornication), Atheism, Devil-worship, use of USURY, Intoxication, (Alcohol & Drug abuse), Crime, Injustice, Oppression, Fitnah of the Pen (Pornography magazines etc.), cause wars, Famine, Massacres, Rape and suffering on an immeasurable scale.

The DAJJAL-system is of course as we know is FREEMASONRY Every single position in the United Nations, The EEC and every position in the British Parliament is held by people who are Freemasons. Freemasonry has something in the region of 700,000 members in England and Wales, yet the British public hardly know anything about them. Freemasons secretly worship a Devil-God, known as JAHBULON, If you do not believe me (see pages 230-240 of the International best selling book on Freemasonry "The Brotherhood", by

Stephen Knight & "Satanic Voices", by David M Pidcock).

The Jews, the Christians, the Atheists and Secularist, the Munafiqeen, the whole of Kuffaar shall fall under the banner of the Anti-Christ, against Islam. It may also surprise you to know that all Christian Organizations are Masonic Institutions. About 60% of the Archbishops are Freemasons and secretly practice Devil-worship (see above mentioned books). If you want to know if a church is being used as a Masonic-Temple, then look on the stained glass windows for a Masonic symbol such as 'a snake and a dagger, or a star of David '. If the church is in the shape of a Greek Temple, then it is definitely used for Masonic purposes. In Liverpool, the Roman Catholic cathedral has many Pyramids, Masonic symbols. There may be much fear about DAJJAL, but the final victory has been promised to the Muslims. Whereby every single Jew/Freemason shall be put to death. The whole Earth shall be cleansed of Kuffaar once and for all.

Imraan Bin Hussain (RA) relates that I heard Prophet (SAWS) saying : "That since the birth of Adam (AS) till the advent of Qiyamah (Judgement day), there is no Fitnah (Evil, test) much greater than that of DAJJAL" (MUSLIM).

DAJJAL will emerge from a place between Syria and Iraq, and his emergence will become known when he is in Isfahaan at a place called Judea (Yahudea). He will be of Jewish origin. He will have caused his Jewish parents much distress and pain. The Jews will accept him

as “The Messiah” and become his main followers. He will also have a great number of women followers as well. The entire secular world (Jews/Freemasons, Atheist, Christians, Hindus Etc.) shall unite under the banner of the Anti-Christ against Islam. Islam will be the only force standing between him and the total world domination.

Huzaifah (RA) says, “Dajjal will be blind in one eye”. This blind eye will be swollen like a grape: There will be a thick finger-like object in his eye. The letters “KAF”, “FE”, “RE” will be written on his forehead (meaning - Unbeliever). Every Muslim will be able to read these letters whether he is literate or illiterate. He will travel at great speeds by means of a gigantic animal-like a mule... (MUSLIM & AHMAD).

Ubaidah Bin Saamit (RA) says, Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) said “ I have explained DAJJAL to you, but I fear that you might not have understood. DAJJAL will be short, and his legs will be crooked. The hair on his head will be extremely twisted... If you have any doubt regarding DAJJAL, remember that your Sustainer (ALLAH), is not one eyed. (Because DAJJAL will eventually claim to be God himself. His followers shall accept him as such). He will be able to split a person into two and then bring him back life again... (AHMAD).

Narrated Hudhayfah ibn al-Yaman: “Subay’ ibn Khalid said: I came to Kufah at the time when Tustar was conquered. I took some mules from it. When I entered the mosque (of Kufah), I found there some people of

moderate stature, and among them was a man whom you could recognize when you saw him that he was from the people of Hijaz. I asked: Who is he? The people frowned at me and said: Do you not recognize him? This is Hudhayfah ibn al-Yaman, the companion of the Apostle of Allaah (peace_be_upon_him). Then Hudhayfah said: People used to ask the Apostle of Allaah (peace_be_upon_him) about good, and I used to ask him about evil. Then the people stared hard at him. He said: I know the reason why you dislike it. I then asked: Apostle of Allaah, will there be evil as there was before, after this good which Allaah has bestowed on us? He replied: Yes. I asked: Wherein does the protection from it lie? He replied: In the sword. I asked: Apostle of Allaah, what will then happen? He replied: If Allaah has on Earth a caliph who flays your back and takes your property, obey him, otherwise die holding onto the stump of a tree. I asked: What will come next? He replied: Then the Antichrist (Dajjal) will come forth accompanied by a river and fire. He who falls into his fire will certainly receive his reward, and have his load taken off him, but he who falls into his river will have his load retained and his reward taken off him. I then asked: What will come next? He said: The Last Hour will come. (Translation of Sunan Abu-Dawud, Book 35, Trials and Fierce Battles (Kitab Al-Fitan Wa Al-Malahim), Number 4232)”

Narrated Mu’adh ibn Jabal: “The Prophet (peace_be_upon_him) said: The greatest war, the conquest of Constantinople and the coming forth of the Dajjal (Antichrist) will take place within a period of

seven months. (Translation of Sunan Abu- Dawud, Book 37, Battles (Kitab Al-Malahim), Number 4282)”

Narrated Abu Hurayrah: “The Prophet (peace_be_upon_him) said: There is no prophet between me and him, that is, Jesus (peace_be_upon_him). He will descent (to the earth). When you see him, recognise him: a man of medium height, reddish fair, wearing two light yellow garments, looking as if drops were falling down from his head though it will not be wet. He will fight the people for the cause of Islaam. He will break the cross, kill swine, and abolish jizyah. Allaah will perish all religions except Islaam. He will destroy the Antichrist (Dajjal) and will live on the earth for forty years and then he will die. The Muslims will pray over him. (Translation of Sunan Abu-Dawud, Book 37, Battles (Kitab Al-Malahim), Number 4310)”

Huzaifah (RA) also says, He will have with him WATER (Heaven) and FIRE (HELL). In reality his hell shall be heaven and his heaven shall be hell... (MUSLIM). In another Ahaadeeth of Our Prophet (SAWS) has said, that DAJJAL shall not know himself the difference between the two. If you are forced to choose between the two, then choose his fire (Hell), for in reality, it will be cool water, and his water (Heaven), shall be Hell.

Imraan Bin Hussain (RA) says the Prophet (SAWS) said; “Those who hear about DAJJAL should stay far from him. By Allah! A person will approach him thinking him to be a believer, but on seeing his amazing feats, will become his follower”. (ABU DAWOOD).

Note : DAJJAL will have the power to cause Famine, Earth quakes and destruction on a mass scale. Many Muslims will join the ranks of DAJJAL on being afraid of his power. Only those with very strong faith will be able to resist. Remember that once you have joined the Anti-Christ, your soul will be doomed forever in the fire of hell. O Brothers / Sisters please come to the religion of Islam and prepare yourself for the big day. I hope this is of use to you and may Allah guide and protect us, so that we may spread the word of Allah in abundance. Ameen’

B. Media messages from Satan

‘Historically the control and manipulation of political opinion has been the Freemason’s main weapon in gaining control of countries and states. Once in control of the rulers and politicians of a country, laws and political structures could be changed in accordance with their agenda. However, since restricting the body does not necessarily mean restricting the mind, the freemasons recognised that their plan for a global government hinges completely on subduing the masses to their agenda. And thus, eliminating opposition to their cause. And the greatest threat to their plan posing more danger than any army or law is the threat of a free thinking mind. In order to eliminate this threat and to achieve their objective the freemason had set about the boldest plan ever devised...the complete control of every aspect of human life... Your life!

And the weapons they are using against you are in your very home, entertaining and your children and gradually indoctrinating you without you even realising.

In today's society people are spending more and more time engaged with modern media: television, cinema, computer games, the Internet. Popular fiction and popular music are integral part of their lives. Yet this provide of vast expanse on information which you are taking either consciously or subconsciously into your mind - information on society ranging from ideals or morals and the difference between right and wrong, to the way societies and economies should be structured, is passed before you every single day. These media play a significant role in providing the basis for determining an individual's view of the world and everything that exists. Thus, any one group in complete control of this information placed on this media will in effect have the power to indoctrinate practically the entire populace of the world to their way of thinking. And it is this fact the freemasons are exploiting. The masons are using the entertainment industry in particular to condition people to their way of thinking, either openly or subliminally. The methods they use vary but the goal is the same, to impose their beliefs, their ideology and their objectives on you in such a way that you begin to think of them as your own. Evidence of their presence within popular entertainment is widespread. Masonic involvement in the industry is not a new thing. A great composer, Wolfgang Amadeos Mozart, a freemason himself, composed a symphony, which was an open display of freemasonry.

The symphony is based on a story taken from ancient Egyptian mythology of Isis and Osiris. The pagans' rites of ancient Egyptian mythology form through the caballa one of the fundamental aspects of freemasonry. It is from these same pagan origins of Egypt that the symbol of the "one eye" stems. Evidence of the freemasonic presence is also commonly found in the popular music of more recent time - Michael Jackson, held today as the king of pop is regarded as the greatest entertainer of all times. He is responsible for providing the best-selling album in the world, may not be known to be linked with the freemasons. However, the cover of his album 'Dangerous' has some interesting features. On it, the freemasonic symbol of the one eye can be found, then also a picture of a watery lay, behind which lay burning flames. It seems as though anyone entering into the water would really be entering into the fire. The cover also has on it a picture of a bald-headed man, well known to the occult as Aleister Crowley.

Aleister Crowley himself was a freemason who became a Satanist and wrote the book "The New Law of Man" which stated in it that it would one day replace the Koran as the law of man.

Links between freemasonry and the occult do end there. The products of the masonically controlled music are riddled with subliminal satanic messages. Backtracking is the means of placing recorded messages into soundtracks in such a way that only become intelligible when the track is replayed backwards. When it is played

forward however the listener would be totally unaware that a message is being played.

Although the listener may be unaware, the subconscious mind can pick up and understand the messages and in the long term, this can be stored in the subconscious mind and may actually affect a person's behaviour or judgement. In many ways, backtracking is like a form of hypnotism or brainwashing and has the power to be very destructive. The first example of backtracking is from the famous female artist Madonna; it features on one of her famous albums and is taken from the song "like a prayer". Played forward, the song sounds like this: *[sound file]* however, as you will hear, it is not to God the prayer is directed at, but Satan. When played backwards, the words "ho hero Satan" are clearly audible. The Freemasonic "one eye" has also been featured on the video for one of Madonna songs, where Madonna actually appears with the one eye coming out of her forehead. Madonna also appears on a video for one of her songs where she is standing on some writing. Closer examination will reveal that this writing is actually Arabic, the language of the Koran. Another example of backtracking is taken from the group "the eagles" and the song is called "Hotel California" *[sound file]*. The words "yes Satan" can be clearly heard when the song is played backwards. As well as containing this message, the song itself is a story in its own right, the California of the song is not a hotel but is actually a street called California, it is on this very street

that the headquarters of a church were founded. But it was not the type of church that one may think.

Instead it is a church that some have called the church of Satan. It was headed and founded by Anthony de Levi, the author of the Satanic Bible. It appears that teachings of this church may have become the integral belief of many famous personalities in the entertainment industry, from rock groups to more mainstream artists. Some have gone as far as promoting the church and its belief. One alleged member of the church is a singer of the "Rolling Stones", who wrote the song "Sympathy for the Devil". It seems that what originally started as a Christian organisation later turned into a heretic religion, even to the Christians, and now has satanic elements mixed in. The entire entertainment world is rife with evidence of the freemason's presence. Openly or subliminally, their agenda and beliefs and ideals are propagated.

This is especially evident within the film industry, on the big screen and the small screen, from big budget Hollywood films to simple cartoons. The masons have not left anything to chance in promoting their message of a global government.

Matt growing [sic.], the creator of one of the most popular cartoon series in television history, "the Simpson's" [sic.], is a self-confessed anarchist. Matt growing himself has openly declared that he wanted to get his own political ideas across within his work. But he wanted to do this in such a way that people would find it easy to accept his ideas. And the means he chose to this

was a cartoon called “the Simpson’s”. So, what exactly is the Simpson’s teaching us and our children? There are many lessons being programmed into us. These include:

- Disregard for authority, either parental or governmental
- The bad man and his disobedience is a way to attain status amongst people
- Ignorance is trendy and cool whereas knowledge is unfashionable

However what is especially worrying is the Masonic undertones of one episode in particular. The episode in which the father, figure of the family, Homer Simpson, becomes obsessed with a group called the stonecutters or should it be called the freemasons? Upon joining the group his fellow-members find a birthmark on him, the mark that makes the rest of the group declare him to be the chosen one: [sound file]. But with his new found honour and dignity, he, Homer Simpson fools himself into thinking that he is god: [sound file].

Some may dismiss it as nothing more than a children’s cartoon, a bit of harmless fun. But the influence it has on audience makes it a very effective means of propaganda. Indoctrinating a people without them even realising. They are propagating their political ideas to the audience in a covered manner. Ideas spread through the domestic television can reach a far wider audience than movies and cinema, and it is through this media that a new concept is being introduced: The concept of one global leader.’

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II

EXPLORING THE MASONIC ARCHIVE

John Pine (1690-1756): Engraver and Freemason

Paper to the Third International Conference of the Conference of the Canonbury Masonic Research Centre, November 2001

This odd looking mess may seem a strange starting point for a conference devoted to the visual arts and freemasonry, but it is how I first made the acquaintance of the remarkable masonic engraver John Pine. This is a picture of one of the two original copies of Magna Carta in the British Library. King John promulgated Magna Carta by issuing royal letters containing the terms of the grant. Four of these letters survive, two of which are in the British Library. This one was damaged in a fire in 1731, a disaster made worse by subsequent heavy-handed conservation treatment. This is the only copy of Magna Carta which still has King John's seal attached. At the time of the fire in 1731, the status of the other letters was still uncertain, and it was assumed that this was the only original Magna Carta. Something needed to be done to record the contents and appearance of the original before its condition deteriorated further.

This is where John Pine came in. He made this engraving of the burnt Magna Carta shortly after the fire. While it may not be the most beautiful work of art, it is a virtuoso piece of engraving, with the dense text of the grant so

carefully represented that it can be easily read. The damaged seal is also depicted with great precision and the areas of initial damage are indicated. An accomplished heraldic engraver, Pine could not resist embellishing this plain medieval document with the arms of the barons supposed to have forced King John to grant Magna Carta. Pine thus established a tradition which has continued down to the present day, and many of the posters of Magna Carta which you can buy nowadays also include these colourful additions. It seemed that the skill of Pine had helped preserve Magna Carta for posterity. It is said that when Pine presented a copy of his engraving to one of the aldermen of London, the alderman gave him twenty guineas in gratitude.

This affectionate portrait of Pine was painted from memory by William Hogarth shortly after Pine's death in 1756. It captures vividly the rumbustious character of the large man who was one of the most flamboyant members of the group of artists who met at Old Slaughters Coffee House in St Martin's Lane, not far from the academy which Hogarth established in 1735.

It seems that Hogarth and Pine came from similar backgrounds, and there were many connections between them. However, in seeking to develop their careers as artists and to earn a comfortable living from their artistic endeavours, they took diametrically opposite approaches. While Hogarth at an early age found that the restrictions imposed by copying the 'monsters of heraldry' were

intolerable and determined to concentrate on the study of nature and the depiction of momentary actions and expressions, Pine developed his craft as a heraldic and historical engraver, eventually achieving security and respectability by himself becoming a herald.

This is a very characteristic example of Pine's work. It is the introduction to a series of engravings of the procession of the Knights Companions of the Bath in 1725. The plates of the procession itself were engraved by Pine from drawings made by the portrait painter Joseph Highmore. However, the sumptuous vignettes, which illustrate the introductory text in French and English are apparently wholly Pine's design.

The range of Pine's work is evident from this charming frontispiece to a book published in 1731 by Philip Miller, the distinguished botanist and curator of the Chelsea Physic Garden from 1722 to 1770, called 'The Gardener's Calendar'.

Pine's masterpiece was the production between 1733 and 1737 of an edition in two volumes of the works of Horace. The remarkable feature of this edition is that the entire volume was wholly engraved, even the text, which is rendered with great clarity and elegance. The whole volume is copiously illustrated with illustrations based on Roman gems and other antiquities, as you can see here. Pine's Horace was one of the great achievements of eighteenth-century book art.

Pine's achievements as an engraver have long been recognised. Horace Walpole declared that Pine's name 'need but be mentioned, to put the public in mind of the several beautiful and fine works for which they are indebted to him', while more recently the art historian Basil Gray in his book *The English Print* claimed that Pine was in his time the only good English engraver. However, although Pine's works are extensively listed and discussed in many art historical reference works, some of his most interesting and scarce works are not mentioned anywhere.

This is the frontispiece to the first edition of James Anderson's *Constitutions of the Free-Masons*, published in 1723. The caption declares that it was 'engraved by John Pine in Aldersgate Street London.' It shows the 2nd Duke of Montagu, Grand Master in 1721, dressed in his robes as a Knight of the Garter, handing the constitutions and a pair of compasses to his successor as Grand Master, the Duke of Wharton. Behind each of the Grand Masters are their deputy and wardens, including, on the extreme right, Dr John Theophilus Desaguliers. Pine's accomplishments as a heraldic engraver are evident from, for example, the care with which Montagu's garter is depicted.

Pine was also responsible for the production of the lists of lodges from 1725 to 1741. This is the frontispiece and opening page of the first such list produced by Pine in 1725. By the name of each lodge appears a miniature

engraving of a sign appropriate to the lodge, usually that of the tavern where the lodge met. These are among the most delightful and engaging of all the artistic works connected with freemasonry. They are tiny volumes, and the extraordinary liveliness which Pine introduces into the miniature emblems for each lodge is particularly notable.

Here is another of the engraved lists, this time from 1734, and the care with which Pine executed the lodge signs is particularly evident here.

Keeping these engraved lists up to date must have been a considerable undertaking for Pine. During the time he was responsible for their production, the number of lodges increased from 50 to 189. Moreover, he also had to update the list every time a lodge moved, changed its time of meeting or was erased. The difficulty of keeping up to date with all these changes is evident from the annotated versions kept by the Grand Secretary, which are preserved in the Library and Museum of Freemasonry, one of which you can see here. At first, it seems that Pine recouped his costs by the sale of the lists, but in 1738 he found the expense of these constant alterations too much to bear, and it was agreed in the year when this list was published that he should be paid 2s 6d by every lodge whenever they changed their meeting place and 1s when they changed their times of meeting.

Pine was also responsible for a number of other masonic engravings. This sumptuous headpiece containing the arms of Frederick, Prince of Wales, which Pine contributed to the 1738 edition of the Book of Constitutions is a very characteristic example of his work.

Pine's substantial output of masonic engraving has been completely ignored by art historians. Although the engravings in the Book of Constitutions and the engraved lists of lodges are very well known among masonic scholars, none of the various articles on Pine in art historical reference works mention any of his masonic engravings. This creates an evident distortion in appreciation of his work. Apart from the high quality of Pine's masonic work, failure to refer to it leaves a big hole in our understanding of his career. The frontispiece of the 1723 Book of Constitutions and the first of his engraved lodge lists are among the earliest of his works to survive. The production of the engraved lists formed the backbone of his output as an engraver for the earliest part of his career, and the trade generated as a result of this work must have played an important part in allowing him to undertake larger projects such as the Horace edition.

However, the fault is not entirely that of art historians. Such treasures as the engraved lists have long been celebrated by masonic scholars, but on the whole they have taken little interest in Pine's non-masonic output. A

shining exception to this is E. Leslie Johnson, who recently gave a comprehensive review of Pine's work to the Manchester Association for Masonic Research, and I am very grateful to Mr Johnson for letting me see a copy of his paper, which I have drawn on here. Nevertheless, it is almost as if there are two John Pines, on the one hand the celebrated historical and heraldic engraver, and on the other the masonic engraver. These two Pines generally seem to have little connection with each other. What I want to suggest today is that we can make little sense of Pine unless we consider his work as a whole.

Pine's career as a freemason can be quickly outlined. He was, according to the first minute book of Grand Lodge, a member of the lodge meeting at the Globe in Moorgate, which is now Old Dundee Lodge No. 18, and in 1726 was a member of the lodge at the Horn Tavern, now the Royal Somerset House and Inverness lodge no. 4. At the Grand Feast held on 29 January 1730, he was present as Marshall 'with his truncheon blew, tipt with gold'.

Pine's freemasonry provided another point of contact with William Hogarth. Hogarth's date of initiation is unknown, but by 1725 was a member of the lodge which met at the Hand and Apple Tree, Little Queen Street. In 1731, he joined the lodge at the Bear and Harrow, now St George and Corner Stone Lodge No. 5. Hogarth became a Grand Steward in 1735 and in the same year joined the Steward's Lodge.

However, Hogarth's relationship with freemasonry was apparently more troubled than that of Pine. This famous 1724 print, *The Mystery of Masonry Brought to Light By The Gormogons*, has been interpreted as a comment on the turbulent Grand Mastership of the Duke of Wharton shortly before, but its precise implications and interpretation remain unclear.

Likewise the famous depiction by Hogarth of the unpopular London magistrate and doctor Thomas de Veil making his drunken way home from a lodge meeting, which forms the centrepiece of the picture of Night in the 'Four Times of Day' sequence again suggests that Hogarth felt that the motives of some in joining freemasonry were not as idealistic as they might be.

Hogarth's apparent jibe at de Veil was made more telling by the fact that de Veil was a neighbour of his in Leicester Square and belonged to the same lodge.

Similarly, if the preacher in Hogarth's *Sleeping Congregation* is indeed Dr Desaguliers, the supreme ideologue of freemasonry at the time Hogarth and Pine were active as freemasons, then it again suggests that Hogarth was not entirely in sympathy with new developments in freemasonry.

Critics such as Ronald Paulson have shown how Hogarth's relationship with freemasonry was a very complex one, and worked at many different levels. One

of these was patronage. Driven by his childhood memories of the horrors of poverty and indebtedness, Hogarth sought to find new ways of making money from his art. He pioneered new methods of distributing reproductions of his work, and organised his own art sales. He made use of public spaces such as Vauxhall Gardens and the Foundling Hospital to gain an audience for his art.

Freemasonry helped provide Hogarth with an important network of contacts. This pair of paintings, entitled *Before and After*, which have been described as one of Hogarth's most daring experiments in the depiction of the erotic, was commissioned by John, 2nd Duke of Montagu, the first nobleman to serve as Grand Master of the Grand Lodge in London. It is not surprising that a pair of pictures should appeal to Montagu. His mother-in-law, Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, declared that 'his talents lie in things natural to boys of fifteen, and he is about two and fifty. To get people into his gardens and wet them with squirts, to invite people to his country house and put things in their beds to make them itch, and twenty other such pretty fancies'.

However, these special commissions were very important for Hogarth. *Before and After* helped pave the way for the *Harlot's Progress* which first established his popular reputation.

It is striking that, as Hogarth found that the sale of prints based on series like the Harlot's Progress he could make him most money, he also ceased to become an active freemason. He had outgrown the need for the network of employment and patronage which freemasonry could provide. However, paintings like his monumental depiction of the Pool of Bethesda for St Bartholomew's Hospital, which is a thoughtful commentary on charity, suggests that he still continued to take an interest in the religious and moral issues raised by freemasonry.

In the case of Pine, freemasonry was also important for the networking opportunities it provided, but he used them in a different way to Hogarth. At one level, freemasonry was for Pine simply good business. Work such as that on the engraved lists provided a steady income which was a great asset in the cut-throat world of the London print trade. It also provided contacts which were valuable in offering him opportunities for important commissions. This assisted Pine in building up the all-important subscription lists for major projects such as the Horace edition. Eventually, these were to lead to important public appointments which provided Pine with security and respectability for the rest of his life. Again, it is striking that, at the point where he achieved these, he scaled back his involvement with freemasonry.

In 1720, Pine produced illustrations for a poem describing the biblical story of Jonah. This is the earliest

surviving work of Pine. This illustration shows Jonah being thrown into the sea.

The frontispiece to Jonah was this picture entitled Imagination. This was an engraving by Pine of a drawing by Bernard Picart. Picart was a French artist who was also a radical deist writer and propagandist who was forced to seek exile in Holland. Picart's clear and precise style of engraving exercised an important influence on Hogarth and other English artists. If Pine had been a pupil of Picart, this would be very interesting as suggesting a connection between Pine and radical European thought of the time. However, there is no firm evidence that Picart trained Pine. While Picart evidently deeply influenced Pine, there is no indication Pine ever went to Amsterdam to study with him. Basil Grey's suggestion that Pine, like Hogarth, began his artistic career as an apprentice silver engraver in London seems far more credible.

One of Picart's most important projects was called 'The Ceremonies and Religious Customs of the World', which Margaret Jacob has described as 'one of the most fascinating anthologies of the early Enlightenment'. Jacob succinctly describes the interest of this work as follows: 'This magnificently engraved and illustrated anthology catalogued the practices and rituals of Christians and non-Christians without attention to the supposed veracity of Christian doctrine. The implication, which presaged the science of anthropology, was clear

enough; all religions are the same and all fulfill similar human needs - but the editors would have added, not all of them ennobling'.

The first volume of this huge work was produced in Amsterdam in 1723. Picart died after only three volumes had appeared, and the work was completed by his collaborator Jean-Frederic Bernard. The fourth volume, which appeared in 1736, contains a chapter on 'modern mystical sects', which includes a lengthy, and not particularly sympathetic, description of freemasonry, drawn largely from Samuel Prichard's *Masonry Dissected*. Bernard notes that in 1735 the freemasons had produced a list of the lodges in London edited by Pine 'lui-même Free-Mason', illustrated with beautiful engravings of the lodge signs. Bernard says that he has reproduced this book because of the curiosity of the engraving, and includes this fanciful representation of the 1735 engraved list, drawn by the Dutch artist du Bourg. The inclusion of this version of the engraved list does not reflect, as has sometimes been suggested, any connection between Pine and Picart, who had already been dead for two years by this time. The more likely means by which Bernard found out about the lodge list is through Old Slaughter's Coffee House, which was frequented at that time by a number of the artists working on illustrations for this publication.

The failure of art historians to notice Pine's masonic work means that a far more important early influence on

him has not been noted, namely this gentleman, Sir James Thornhill. Thornhill was at this time the most famous painter in England, the sergeant painter of the King, renowned for his monumental paintings celebrating the Protestant succession at Greenwich Hospital. Thornhill was a freemason. He was master of the lodge at the Swan, East Street, in Greenwich, and appointed Senior Grand Warden in 1728. Thornhill took the young Hogarth under his wing, and became his father-in-law when Hogarth married his daughter against his wishes. The frontispiece for the first engraved list of lodges produced by Pine was made by Thornhill, and Thornhill doubtless played some role in arranging for this work to be undertaken by Pine. He perhaps also had an influence on the selection of Pine to produce the frontispiece for the Book of Constitutions.

Masonic connections perhaps played a role in securing Pine his next major commission, the engraving of the procession of the Order of the Bath. The drawings of the procession were done by the portrait painter Joseph Highmore, who was also a member of the lodge at East Street Greenwich, and became Junior Grand Warden in 1727, serving as Warden for many years afterwards. Moreover, the Grand Master of the Order of the Garter, who was responsible for overseeing the arrangements for the procession, was the Duke of Montagu himself, who can hardly have failed to be aware of Pine's skilful portrait of him in the Book of Constitutions two years previously. These masonic connections may help account

for the tone of pique in the description of this volume with which the engraver George Vertue referred to the publication in his notebook, suggesting that neither Highmore or Pine were worthy of such a prestigious commission.

The Thornhill connection may also have accounted for Pine's involvement in the engraving of the burnt Magna Carta in 1733. Thornhill produced a painting of a Committee of the House of Commons into corruption in the Fleet Prison. He was assisted in this by Hogarth. The picture includes an imposing portrait of the speaker at that time Arthur Onslow, who was also one of the Trustees of the Library which contained Magna Carta and took an active part in trying to preserve information about the damaged document.

Pine showed exceptional skill in cultivating these contacts to allow him to develop further large projects. His ability to pursue such elaborate undertakings as his celebrated Horace, his chief preoccupation between 1733 and 1737, of which you can see an opening here, depended crucially on his ability to attract subscriptions from the noble and wealthy. Again, his masonic contacts would have assisted in this. At the head of the imposing subscription list for the first volume was the name of that mason whose arms Pine had engraved, Frederick, Prince of Wales, to whom the first volume was dedicated. The following five hundred names included such masonic luminaries as the Duke of Montagu, the Duke of

Richmond (a member of Pine's own lodge and Grand Master from 1724-5), Lord Darnley, Grand Master in 1737, Lord Abercorn, Grand Master in 1726, his successor as Grand Master, Lord Inchiquin, William Cowper, the Clerk of Parliament and first Grand Secretary, Richard Rawlinson, and Charles Delafaye, under-secretary of state and enthusiastic composer of masonic hymns.

However, Pine's skill as a networker was not restricted to his masonic contacts. The list of subscribers includes a number of members of the Order of the Garter, suggesting that Pine had enthusiastically capitalised on his introduction to that order. Pine's position at the social heart of the cultural life of the 1730s is also apparent from the inclusion on the subscription list of such names as Handel, Halley, Alexander Pope (a freemason), Sir Hans Sloane, the founder of the British Museum and probably a freemason, and of course Hogarth himself. Pine was a born networker. His talents in cultivating his subscribers was as remarkable in its way as Hogarth's flair in gaining direct access to a popular market, and his masonic work, which had helped first bring him to public attention, played a key part in this.

The most remarkable feature of the Horace was the engraving of the entire text, and perhaps Pine's first work on Horace helped prompt an experiment at Grand Lodge in the early 1730s. As the number of provincial lodges grew, it became more important to keep them up to date

with the quarterly communications. It was thought to be too cumbersome and time-consuming to print them. Pine suggested that he could produce etched copies of the communications in three days. It was agreed to try this, but the experiment was unsuccessful and soon discontinued. Only one set of the etched minutes survives, for a quarterly communication of 21 November 1732, which are in the possession of Anchor and Hope Lodge No. 37 in East Lancashire, which you can see [here](#).

The success of the Horace prompted Pine to produce an edition of Virgil with similar decorations, which was published in 1755. In the Virgil, however, the text is printed.

Shortly after the defeat of the Spanish Armada, Lord Howard of Effingham, who commanded the English forces which dispersed the Spanish fleet, had prepared by the surveyor Robert Adams a series of charts depicting the successive engagements in the Channel between the English fleet and the Armada. These charts were afterwards engraved from Adam's drawings by Augustine Ryther. Lord Howard employed a young Dutch painter, Cornelius Vroom, to make ten great pieces of tapestry celebrating Howard's greatest victory. Vroom drew extensively on the work of Adams and Ryther in designing these tapestries. Vroom's tapestries were later sold to the House of Lords and hung in the chamber. What you can see here is part of Pine's most

celebrated works, his engravings of Vroom's tapestries. The plate shown here shows how Vroom rendered Adams's original maps. Pine described part of the motivation for the project as follows: 'Because time, or accident, or moths may deface these valuable shadows, we have endeavoured to preserve their likeness in the following prints which, by being multiplied and dispersed in various hands, may meet with that security from the closets of the curious, which the originals must scarce always hope for, even from the sanctity of the place they are kept in'. Pine's concern for the safety of the original tapestries proved well founded, since in 1834 they were destroyed in the fire which engulfed the old Palace of Westminster.

Shown here is the first plate which depicts the Spanish Fleet coming up the channel, near the Lizard, as it was first sighted by the English. The praise lavished upon Pine's tapestry engravings emphasised the sumptuousness of their production. They were said to 'rival the splendid editions of the Louvre' and to be 'ornaments to a princely library'. The production of such works again depended on recruiting wealthy and influential subscribers, and the subscription list again includes a number of Grand Masters and other eminent masons.

Pine was concerned to protect this intellectual and artistic investment. There was no point in labouring years to produce work of such high quality if it could be

immediately copied and sold more cheaply by competitors. Pine was one of those who joined Hogarth in petitioning parliament for the passing of an act to protect the copyright of artistic works. As the act was passing through parliament, Pine was just completing work on his Armada engravings, and a special clause was inserted in the act to secure to Pine the profits arising from the sale of the Armada engravings, so that they became in a way national works.

Despite Pine's success in securing subscribers for major projects, the life of a print maker was no means a secure one. In 1743, the Earl of Wilmington wrote to the Secretary of State Lord Carteret, pointing out that there was a vacancy for the post of engraver of his Majesty's Signets and Seals. It was a position, he pointed out, that had a salary of fifty pounds a year attached, and required a 'man bred to the business'. He recommended that Pine should be appointed (a man not unknown to your Lordship, wrote Wilmington), and Pine duly received the patent. This is the Treasury copy of the warrant for his appointment.

The office of engraver of the seals was an important one when the king died, and new seals had to be produced for his successor, but otherwise little demands were made on the postholder. Fortunately for Pine, the King's health remained good during his tenure of the office, and there is no evidence that he ever designed any royal seals by virtue of this office.

The appointment as engraver of the seals was followed later that year by an even more prestigious appointment as Bluemantle Pursuivant in the College of Arms, which brought not only a further salary but a residence in the College in London. The relationship between the College of Arms and freemasonry is a subject worthy of closer examination, but there is not time to go into it here. Suffice it to say that two of the most senior heralds at the time of Pine's appointment were masons, and the appointment of Pine would certainly have helped further cement the long-standing relationship between the heralds and masonry, which dated back to the time of Ashmole and continues today.

However, Pine's appointment as a herald seems to coincide with his abandonment of his chief activity on behalf of freemasonry, the production of the engraved lists. The last surviving list produced by Pine dates from 1741. No lists survive for 1742 and 1743. In 1745, another publisher, Benjamin Cole, produced this list using Pine's plates.

Pine's new respectability was however threatened by the irrepressible pen of his old friend Hogarth. In 1748, Hogarth produced this painting, afterwards made available as an engraving, *The Gate of Calais*, or the *Roast Beef of Old England*. It is an anti-French satire prompted by an incident when Hogarth visited France and was briefly arrested for sketching an old gateway at Calais.

The figure of the ravenous friar in the centre of the picture, trying to grab the juicy joint of beef, was modelled, as you can see here, on Pine. It is said that Pine pleaded with Hogarth not to include him in this picture, doubtless anxious that this was inappropriate for a herald and holder of a royal office.

Pine's main preoccupation during his time as a Herald was with a project with which he had become involved as early as 1739. Pine's rival George Vertue had proposed the previous year the production of a comprehensive map of London and its suburbs. He had sought to engage as the surveyor for the project John Rocque, a Huguenot refugee who had produced a number of plans of royal parks and palaces for the Prince of Wales. Vertue failed to reach agreement with Rocque, and Rocque decided to take the project elsewhere. He got in touch with Pine.

The attraction of using Pine as the engraver was probably his proven skill in attracting influential patrons and subscribers. One of Pine and Rocque's first acts was to seek the support of the Corporation of London. Pine attended the meeting of the Court of Aldermen in person, and in order to demonstrate the size and style of the map, he showed the aldermen a rough drawing of it. The aldermen immediately agreed to give the venture their full backing, and issued an order instructing all city officials to give their co-operation.

This enabled Rocque to proceed with the work of surveying. Bearings were taken from the tops of church steeples and other tall buildings. The angle of every street was also calculated and the length of each street measured with a chain.

Masonic contacts, presumably secured by Pine, again proved useful in expediting the project. Martin Folkes, the President of the Royal Society and of course a Grand Master, and Peter Davall, the Secretary of the Royal Society, provided the project with a glowing testimonial:

'Having seen what is already done of the new Survey of London undertaken by Mr. Rocque and Mr Pine, having been informed of their manner of proceeding, and having been present at the taking some remarkable Measures, and at the Verifying of several of the principal Angles, we are enabled to declare, That we are satisfied with the same, and that we think we may justly recommend it as a work of great use, likely to be performed with judgement and exactness, and well deserving encouragement'.

When the appearance of the map was delayed, Folkes and Davall were again wheeled out to assure that the only reasons for the delay was the 'more rigorous examination' which was necessary to get the details of the plan as accurate as possible.

The enormous cost of the enterprise seems to have caused particular difficulties for Rocque, whose name

was withdrawn as one of the publishers in the last stages, despite his responsibility for the critical surveying work. Pine called in another printmaker, John Tinney, to help bring the project to conclusion. Finally, in October 1746, Pine and Tinney attended the Court of Aldermen, where they presented the aldermen with a set of proof impressions of the map. The aldermen ordered the map to be hung in the Guildhall Justice Rooms, and instructed the Chamberlain to present the map makers with a gift of £50. Some further improvements and corrections to the map were still found to be necessary, and the map was only finally issued to subscribers in June 1747, after nearly eight years labour.

This detail, showing part of Bloomsbury, illustrates the quality of the engraving of this map. Although this map is usually - quite rightly - associated with Rocque's name, Pine's masterly engraving also played a vital part in assuring the utility and success of the project. But, as I have indicated, equally important was Pine's immense skills in using his social contacts to bring in money for the project. The introductory problem which accompanied the map emphasises that the historian of London, Maitland, had thought that the task of preparing a detailed map of such a huge city was an impossible one, because of the vast expense involved. In Berlin, Pine and Rocque stressed, 'the making of a plan of the city is thought worthy the care of a minister of state, and the patronage of a king who is an avowed encourager of useful undertakings'.

Pine succeeded in putting together a subscription list which could do what was previously thought to be impossible, and which other countries required state assistance to produce.

Rocque also undertook a number of other surveys. He surveyed Bristol, and the engraving of this map by Pine was published in 1743.

The quality of Pine's engraving of maps made him sought after by other map makers, as can be seen from this plan of Pontefract, drawn by Paul Jollage, and engraved by Pine in 1742.

A recent masterly essay by Professor Simon McVeigh on Freemasonry and the Musical Life of London in the eighteenth century has illustrated how freemasonry was important to musicians in a number of different ways, both as a direct source of employment and by providing contacts which helped build up patronage. Pine's career suggests that a similar pattern might have applied to artists at this period. Through work such as the engravings for the Books of Constitutions and the engraved lodge lists, freemasonry provided Pine with a steady income up until the time he was able to secure royal sinecures. But even more importantly, it provided him with a number of the contacts which enabled him to build up spectacular subscription lists for projects such as the Horace or the Rocque maps. Interestingly, one of the lodges which McVeigh points out as significant for

musicians - the Somerset House lodge - was Pine's own lodge.

But I'd like to end with a print by another masonic engraver, a contemporary of Pine's, Emmanuel Bowen. Bowen produced the first engraved lodge list of 1724 and another again in 1744. He was a Welshman who became maker of maps to George II and Louis XV. In 1732, when the Bishop of Rochester Francis Atterbury was arrested, deprived of his living and exiled because of his Jacobite activities, Bowen produced this print, depicting Atterbury as another Laud. Bowen was himself arrested and his entire stock of the print seized. Bowen was eventually released, but the print was retained. Bowen was shocked afterwards to find the print on sale. He wrote to Delafaye protesting that these prints could only have come from the stock impounded by his office.

Bowen protested that he had no intention of causing trouble for the government, 'my view being only to get a penny in the way of my business, my loyalty to his late and present majesty and our happy establishment having never been disputed or suspected'. He pointed out that since the Bishop was now dead, there could be no harm in selling the prints, and declared that 'the plates and print are inviolably my right of property and to give them away to another person is a manifest injustice to me and my family'. You'll remember that Delafaye was an enthusiastic mason, and this was a card that Bowen could not resist playing. He asked him to interpose 'in favour of

a poor unfortunate brother' to restore the prints, if their sale was now permissible.

Bowen's letter captures the hard-headed and cut-throat world of London engraving and printmaking in the early eighteenth century. It was a world in which masonic membership could make a difference. This was the world in which Pine was able to thrive, and one of John Pine's greatest qualities was the way in which he was able to blend the artistic skills, the business sense and the sheer social networking which was necessary to be a successful artist in eighteenth-century London.

The Unlawful Societies Act of 1799

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‘Mr Pitt used to say that Tom Paine was quite in the right, but then he would add, "What am I to do?"'
*Hester Stanhope*⁸⁸

On 2 April 1799, the M.P. for Southwark, the wealthy banker and evangelical philanthropist Henry Thornton, wrote to the under-secretary in the Home Office, William Wickham, passing on information given to him by a Battersea distiller named Benwell. One of Benwell's employees had recently been asked to join a society which met at Wandsworth. If he joined, he would have to swear a secret oath. He would ‘get a shilling for every attendance at the society, of which he would have to expend 6d at the place of meeting’. He would receive a further 2s 6d for every new member he introduced to the society. Thornton and Benwell were convinced that this was a cell of the subversive organisation known as the United Englishmen. Thornton had urged Benwell to work with a local magistrate to find out the names of all

⁸⁸ *Memoirs of the Lady Hester Stanhope as related by herself in conversations with her physician* (London: Henry Colburn, 1845), 2, p. 22; cited by John Ehrman, *The Younger Pitt: The Consuming Struggle* (London: Constable, 1996), p. 311. Ehrman notes that Hester Stanhope ‘is a notoriously unreliable witness’.

the members of this mysterious Wandsworth club. Thornton ended his letter to Wickham by assuring him of his willingness to assist in ‘detecting the secret societies which may infest the parts around us’. Wickham passed on Thornton's information to the Home Secretary, the Duke of Portland. The Duke thanked Thornton for this intelligence, since the Home Office was uncertain of the exact strength of the United Englishmen. The news that money was being offered as an inducement to join was particularly interesting. The Duke suggested that Benwell should encourage his employee to join the group, so that he could give the Home Office information about it.⁸⁹

This exchange encapsulates the atmosphere of late 1798 and 1799, when seditious societies bound by secret oaths, the harbingers of a French invasion, were seen round every corner.⁹⁰ This atmosphere created a groundswell of

⁸⁹ Public Record Office, HO 42/47, f. 18.

⁹⁰ The literature on the political and social conflicts of this period is enormous. The following draws chiefly on: Marianne Elliott, *Partners in Revolution: The United Irishmen and France* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1982); Albert Goodwin, *The Friends of Liberty: The English Democratic Movement in the Age of the French Revolution* (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 1979); Gwyn A. Williams, *Artisans and Sans-Culottes: Popular Movements in France and Britain during the French Revolution*, 2nd ed. (London: Libris, 1989); J. Ann Hone, *For the Cause of Truth: Radicalism in London 1796-1821* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982); E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 3rd ed. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980); Clive Emsley, *British Society and the French Wars 1793-1815* (London:

support for the passage in July 1799 of one of the most sweeping of the legislative measures introduced by Pitt's government to forestall the threat of revolution. This act, 'An act for the more effectual suppression of societies established for seditious and treasonable purposes; and for the better preventing treasonable and seditious practices',⁹¹ to give its full name, was, almost by accident, to form the mainstay of the relationship between freemasonry and the state in Britain for nearly

Macmillan, 1979); Jennifer Mori, *Britain in the Age of the French Revolution* (London: Longman, 2000); Clive Emsley, *Britain and the French Revolution* (London: Longman, 2000); Clive Emsley, 'An aspect of Pitt's "Terror": prosecutions for sedition during the 1790s', *Social History* 6 (1981), pp. 155-184; Clive Emsley, 'Repression, "terror" and the rule of law in England during the decade of the French Revolution', *English Historical Review* 100 (1985), pp. 801-825; Roger Wells, *Insurrection: The British Experience 1795-1803* (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1983); Iain McCalman, *Radical Underworld: Prophets, Revolutionaries and Pornographers in London 1795-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Iain McCalman, 'Ultra Radicalism and convivial debating clubs in London, 1775-1838', *English Historical Review* 102 (1987), pp. 309-333; Edward Royle, *Revolutionary Britannia? Reflections on the Threat of Revolution in Britain, 1789-1848* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 1-66; Ehrman, *op. cit.*, pp. 158-194, 277-316.

⁹¹ 39 Geo.III, c. 79. The provisions of the act are summarised in R. F. Gould, *The History of Freemasonry* (London: Thomas C. Jack, 1885), 4, pp. 486-7.

two hundred years, until its repeal by the Criminal Justice Act of 1967.⁹²

One of the most important of the radical bodies which emerged in Britain in the wake of the French Revolution was the United Irishman, a 'United Society of the Irish nation; to make all Irishmen citizens - all citizens Irishmen', which was established in 1791.⁹³ Its initial

⁹² In the 1985 Book Club Associates edition of Stephen Knight, *The Brotherhood: The Secret World of the Freemasons* (London: Guild Publishing, 1985), there is a statement on the first page that 'Under the Unlawful Societies Act of 1799 - unlikely, of course, ever to be enforced - Freemasons are permitted to hold meetings only if yearly returns providing names, addresses and descriptions of brethren are submitted to local Clerks of the Peace. This is rarely done, so most gatherings in masonic lodges are held in breach of this law'. This Act had been long repealed by the time Knight was writing, so this is completely wrong, which doubtless explains why this statement was withdrawn in the 1985 Panther Books reprint of this book, although a reference to the Unlawful Societies Act still appears in the index. Knight's reference to this act is a characteristic example of the way in which he invariably attempts to put freemasonry in the worse possible light. He attempts to suggest that the aim of the 1799 Act was to outlaw or regulate freemasonry, whereas, as will be seen, the aim of the 1799 Act was to outlaw such dangerous innovations as organisations with committees and elected officers, and freemasonry was specifically exempted from this because it was seen as presenting no threat.

⁹³ Elliott, *op.cit.*; Nancy J. Curtin, *The United Irishmen: Popular politics in Ulster and Dublin, 1791-1798* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994); David Dickson, Dáire Keogh and Kevin Whelan, *The United Irishmen: Republicanism, Radicalism and Rebellion* (Dublin: The Lilliput Press, 1993).

aims were catholic emancipation and radical parliamentary reform; by 1796 it had become an avowedly republican movement. The United Irish sent embassies to France to seek support for an uprising and independence, but the French and United Irish failed effectively to coordinate their efforts. In 1796, the French landed at Bantry Bay, but did not give the United Irish any advance warning; two years later, the French were in turn caught by surprise by an Irish rebellion and failed to provide adequate military support. The arrests of United Irish leaders which had helped precipitate the rebellion and the fierce repression of the rising left the United Irishmen a much diminished movement.

In England, the most prominent of the radical bodies which sprang up after 1789 was the London Corresponding Society. In 1794, a number of its leaders were arrested and tried for treason. These trials were unsuccessful, but subsequent legislation and internal difficulties had by 1797 reduced the influence of the L.C.S. From this time, an increasingly close alliance developed between Irish republican movements and those on the British mainland, with the formation of societies of United Englishmen and United Scotsmen on the Irish model. Some of the remaining members of the L.C.S. played an important part in the United movement in Britain. Further impetus was given to the United societies by Irish migrants active in Manchester and other parts of the north-west.

Despite the great blows suffered by the republican movement in 1798 as a result of the arrest of much of its leadership and the failure of the Irish revolt, Pitt's government remained uncertain of the real strength of the United bodies and was worried that they were regrouping. Shortly before Christmas 1798, the opposition Whigs accused Pitt of justifying repressive measures by scare mongering. Pitt responded by declaring that, if need be, the truth of his allegations could be proved.⁹⁴ The following month, parliamentary committees were appointed to examine secret evidence held by the government and to report back to parliament on the nature of the threat.⁹⁵ The House of Commons secret committee reported on 15 March 1799.⁹⁶ It declared that, from the documents shown to it by the government, it had found the 'clearest proofs of a systematic design, long since adopted and acted upon by France, in conjunction with domestic traitors...to overturn the laws, constitution and government, and

⁹⁴ *Parliamentary History* 34 (1798-1800), pp. 124-5.

⁹⁵ *Parliamentary History* 34 (1798-1800), pp. 208-9.

⁹⁶ The reports of the secret committees were printed separately and widely circulated. The report of the House of Commons committee is most conveniently consulted in *Commons' Journals* 54 (1799), pp. 329-371, and Hansard's *Parliamentary History*, 34 (1799-1800), cols. 579-656. The secret committee of the House of Lords reported on 27 May and the report can be found in *Lords' Journals* 42 (1798-1800), pp. 222-4, *Parliamentary History* 34 (1799-1800), cols. 1000-1006, and *The Parliamentary Register*, 3rd series, 9 (1799), pp. 524-531.

every existing establishment, civil or ecclesiastical, both in Great Britain and Ireland, as well as to dissolve the connection between the two kingdoms...' The secret committee went on to state that 'The most effectual engine employed for this purpose has been the institution of political societies, of a nature and description before unknown in any country, and inconsistent with public tranquillity and with the existence of public government'.

The report described the various United bodies and their connections with the London Corresponding Society. It emphasised their use of 'an oath of fidelity and secrecy' to 'form themselves, under the eye and in defiance of government, into one body, compacted by one bond of union'. The report described how these societies 'principally carried on their intercourse by agents, who went from place to place, and were recognized by signs, which were frequently changed'. The documentary appendix of the report included examples of membership certificates issued by London divisions of the United Irish, certifying that the bearer had passed various tests. Equally alarming to the committee was the organisational structure of these groups. The elaborate hierarchy of the United Irish, with their overall executive directory and subordinate baronial, district and county committees, was described in detail. The appendix reprinted the rules of various United groups in full. In the view of the secret committee, a sinister feature of these organisations was that the forms of election used meant that the

membership as a whole did not know the composition of the executive committee.

The report noted how previous legislation had restricted subversive lectures and meetings, but added that 'many of the debating societies, which subsist at the present time, appear, to your committee, to be, in great measure, directed to the same pernicious objects, and to require further animadversion and correction'. Likewise, the committee was concerned about 'the establishment of clubs, among the lowest classes of the community, which were open to all persons paying one penny, and in which songs were sung, toasts given, and language held, of the most seditious nature'. The secret committee also called for further restrictions on the press, which it considered excessively licentious.

The trustworthiness of the information in the secret committee's report has been hotly debated for a long time.⁹⁷ The most trenchant criticisms were made in the 1820s by the radical and former member of the L.C.S., Francis Place, in his *Autobiography*.⁹⁸ Place singled out as particularly ludicrous the claims of the secret committee that there were forty divisions of United Englishmen in London. In Place's view, the United Englishmen in London amounted to no more than a few

⁹⁷ Wells, *op. cit.*, p. 168.

⁹⁸ *The Autobiography of Francis Place*, ed. Mary Thale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), pp. 138-152, 176-186.

disreputable hot-heads, egged on by government spies.⁹⁹ However, Place was anxious to demonstrate his own respectability and to show that the L.C.S. in its early days was a force for moral improvement. Moreover, he was based in London and was not well-informed about conditions in north-western England, Scotland and Ireland.¹⁰⁰ Whatever the truth of the allegations of the secret committee, its political consequences can be more easily established.

On 19 April 1799, the House of Commons debated the report of its secret committee. Pitt rose to announce the measures proposed by his government.¹⁰¹ The suspension of Habeas Corpus was to continue, and powers would be sought to move prisoners about the country as the government sought fit. Pitt continued: 'we must proceed still farther, now that we are engaged in a most important struggle with the restless and fatal spirit of Jacobinism, assuming new shapes, and concealing its malignant and destructive designs under new forms and new practices. In order to oppose it with effect, we must also from time to time adopt new modes, and assume new shapes'. Not only should the societies mentioned by name in the secret committee's report, the L.C.S., the United Irish, the

United Britons, the United Scotsmen and the United Englishmen, be suppressed, but all societies of this type should be made unlawful. Pitt described the characteristics of the societies he wanted to outlaw: 'These marks are, wicked and illegal engagements of mutual fidelity and secrecy by which the members are bound; the secrecy of electing the members; the secret government and conduct of the affairs of the society; secret appointments unknown to the bulk of the members; presidents and committees, which, veiling themselves from the general mass and knowledge of the members, plot and conduct the treason - I propose that all societies which administer such oaths shall be declared unlawful confederacies...' Noting the remarks of the secret committee about debating clubs, Pitt also proposed that all meetings where money was taken at the door should require a magistrate's licence.¹⁰² The final part of the measures proposed by Pitt were major new restrictions on printers. All publications should in future bear the name of their author and publisher. A general register was to be established of all printing presses, including those owned by private individuals.

George Tierney, the effective leader of the Foxite opposition in the Commons who in the previous year had

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 178.

¹⁰⁰ cf. Thompson, *op. cit.*, pp. 63, 188-90; Wells, *op. cit.*, p. 168.

¹⁰¹ For reports of this debate, see *The Parliamentary Register*, 3rd series, 8 (1799), pp. 456-482, *Parliamentary History* 34 (1799-1800), cols. 983-998 and *The Senator* 23 (1799), pp. 1368-1401. Quotations are taken from *The Parliamentary Register*.

¹⁰² On the debating societies and their suppression by the 1799 act, see further Mary Thale, 'The London Debating Societies in the 1790s', *Historical Journal* 32 (1989), pp. 57-86.

fought a duel with Pitt¹⁰³, replied. He criticised the report of the secret committee, declaring that he 'never saw a report made to this House that was so little supported by the evidence'. He complained that the proposed law would give undue power to the crown, and breed an army of spies and informers. He pointed out that the effect of such a bill would be 'to pull down every club in the country', since most clubs took some kind of money and would come within the scope of the proposed legislation. Tierney's greatest concern, however, were the restrictions on printers, which he thought worse than an *imprimatur*. He could never support such measures: 'I had rather be subjected to the most bitter reproaches and malicious statements for the remainder of my days, than have the press limited to the extent to which this goes'.

Despite Tierney's opposition, a motion was passed to bring a bill to implement these measures, and the bill was duly published the next day,¹⁰⁴ receiving its first reading in the Commons on 22 April.¹⁰⁵ This bill outlawed the L.C.S., United Englishmen, United Scotsmen, United

¹⁰³ Ehrman, *op. cit.*, pp. 126-8.

¹⁰⁴ 'A Bill for the more effectual suppression of societies established for seditious and treasonable purposes; and for the prevention of other treasonable and seditious practices'. The bill was presented by Sir Richard Glyn, the Lord Mayor of London. It is reproduced in facsimile in Sheila Lambert, *House of Commons Sessional Papers of the Eighteenth Century* (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1975), 120 (Bills, 1798-9), no. 4934 (pp. 365-384).

¹⁰⁵ *Commons' Journals* 54 (1798-9), p. 473.

Irishmen and United Britons by name. It also defined as an unlawful combination and confederacy 'every society, the members whereof shall...be required or admitted to take any oath or engagement...' Societies were required to admit members 'by open declaration at a public meeting of such society'. Every society was required to keep a book containing the names of all its officers, committees and members, which was to be open to inspection by the entire membership. Membership or support of any society which breached these regulations would be a criminal offence. Magistrates acting on the word of a single informer could impose summary fines on offenders; where offenders were indicted by jury and tried in a higher court, the punishment was transportation.

Any premises on which public meetings or lectures were held (apart from universities and properly constituted schools) required a magistrate's licence, even if the premises in question consisted of an open field. Similar licences were also required by reading rooms which charged for admission. The most elaborate provisions of the bill were the restrictions on printing. Anyone possessing a printing press or even type was required to register with the clerk of the peace, who would forward the information to the Home Office. Vendors of printing presses and type had to keep full accounts, open for inspection by a Justice of the Peace. The names and addresses of printers were to appear on the title and end papers of all books. Printers were to keep an archive of

all their publications. The sellers of publications which breached these regulations could be summarily arrested.¹⁰⁶ It was these restrictions on the press which attracted most criticism of the bill when it came to its second reading in the Commons on 30 April.¹⁰⁷

Such wide-ranging legislation was bound to create problems by inadvertently catching in its net harmless and respectable activities. Many of these difficulties became apparent when the bill came to committee on 6 May.¹⁰⁸ The restrictions on lectures created difficulties for such places as the Inns of Court and Chancery, and exemptions for these were added to the bill. Exclusions from the restrictions on printers were inserted for the King's printer and the two university presses. The kind of absurd situation to which the bill could potentially give rise was illustrated by one exchange in which an M.P. asked 'whether astronomical lectures came under the exempting clauses, as the Justices were not compelled, but only allowed to grant licences'. Pitt replied that such occasions 'might be made a cloak for seditious lectures'. The M.P. was not convinced, but the government was

¹⁰⁶ On the regulations concerned with printing and publishing, see further William B. Todd, 'London Printers' Imprints 1800-1840', *The Library* 5th Series 21 (1966), pp. 46-50, and *Warwickshire Printers Notices 1799-1866*, ed. Paul Morgan, Dugdale Society 28 (1970), pp. xi-xxxv.

¹⁰⁷ *The Parliamentary Register*, 3rd series, 8 (1799), pp. 546-9; *The Senator* 23 (1799), pp. 1444-7.

¹⁰⁸ *The Senator* 23 (1799), pp. 1461-1462.

adamant that no such exemption could be permitted. When the bill came to receive its third reading on 9 May, it was belatedly realised that parliament itself could fall foul of the regulations on printers, and a clause was hastily added 'by way of Ryder, declaring that the Provisions of the Bill shall not extend to Papers printed by Order of either House of Parliament'.¹⁰⁹

One major difficulty which had become apparent was the position of freemasons. The provisions of the bill against the use of secret oaths in societies potentially placed freemasons in a difficult position, although arguably these oaths were outside the scope of bill since they were not seditious.¹¹⁰ More problematic was the requirement that initiations should take place in a public meeting. The grand lodges must also have been uneasily aware that they did not have a comprehensive register of members of the sort required by the bill, and that the compilation and distribution of such a register would have been an enormous undertaking.

The two English Grand Lodges and the Scottish Grand Lodge had quickly taken action to try and deal with these problems before the bill got to committee. On 30 April, the day on which the bill received its second reading, Pitt received a request for a meeting with masonic representatives, and a delegation went to Downing Street

¹⁰⁹ *Commons' Journals*, 54 (1798-9), p. 530.

¹¹⁰ But cf. e.g. Gould, *op. cit.*, 4, p. 488.

on 2 May.¹¹¹ The masonic representatives included Lord Moira, Acting Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of England, the Duke of Atholl, Grand Master of the Ancients' Grand Lodge and Past Grand Master Mason of Scotland, as well as other grand officers.¹¹² The most

¹¹¹ Library and Museum of Freemasonry, Hall Committee Minute Books, no. 4 (1788-1813). The minute of the meeting of 30 April is as follows: 'In consequence of the Bill now in Parliament for the more effectual suppression of seditious societies, which contained clauses that might materially affect the existence of the Society, on account of its meetings being secret and the administering of oaths, the Committee was convened to consider what could be done to avert the danger with which the Society was threatened if the Bill passed into a Law, when after the most mature deliberation it was resolved that Mr [John] Dent be requested to ask the favor of the Right Honble William Pitt, to receive a Deputation of the Society, in order to explain the nature of it to him and its attachment to the Government of the Country, to express its readiness to submit to any Regulations the Legislature might judge necessary to prevent the name or meetings of the society being perverted to any seditious purposes & to solicit a modification of the present clauses. Mr Dent having left the committee, soon after sent a Letter, expressing that he had seen Mr Pitt, at the House of Commons, who would be happy to receive a deputation of the Society in Downing Street next Thursday morning at 11 o'clock.' The Hall Committee appointed the following as representatives of the Moderns at the meeting: Lord Moira, Sir John Eames, Senior Grand Warden, Sir Ralph Millbanke, MP, Rowland Burdon, MP, John Dent, MP, James Heseltine, Grand Treasurer, Charles Marsh, George Downing, William White, Grand Secretary.

¹¹² This meeting is noted by John Hamill, *The Craft* (London: Crucible, 1986), pp. 49-50, but the involvement of other masonic representatives apart from Moira is not mentioned.

important official record of this meeting is a note in the minute book of the Hall Committee of the Modern Grand Lodge, reporting that the Prime Minister had 'expressed his good opinion of the Society and said he was willing to recommend any clause to prevent the new act from affecting the Society, provided that the name of the society could be prevented from being made use of as a cover by evilly disposed persons for seditious purposes'.¹¹³ William White, Grand Secretary of the Moderns, afterwards recalled the meeting in similar terms, recalling that Pitt 'paid many compliments to the Society and said there was no imputation against its

¹¹³ Library and Museum of Freemasonry, Minutes of the Hall Committee, No. 4 (1788-1813), minutes of the meeting on 23 July 1799 (partly printed in *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum* 93 (1980), p. 47. A short report of the outcome of the meeting and the insertion of the exemption is in the Library and Museum of Freemasonry, Antient Grand Lodge Minute Books, no. 4 (1796-1812), Grand Lodge meeting 5 June 1799, 'Upon hearing the report of the R.H. Deputy Grand Master respecting the proceedings relative to a Bill now pending in parliament for the suppression of private meetings of societies and now containing a clause granting a privilege to the Grand Lodge of Free Masons of England according to the Old Constitutions and to all subordinate lodges under them to be exempted from the penalties and operation of the said Act. It was resolved unanimously that the thanks of the Grand Lodge be given to the R.W. Grand Master the Duke of Atholl for his uniform and unremitting attention to the Honor and Interest of the Ancient Craft and particularly for his care and exertions in the instance of the bill now pending in parliament from the operation of which the Ancient Craft is by a clause in the said bill exempted'. This minute predates Atholl's vigorous defence of freemasonry in the House of Lords.

conduct, and that it was only wished to adopt some regulations to prevent the name of our Society from being perverted by bad people to a cover for their machinations against the government'.¹¹⁴ Lord Moira also subsequently recalled how 'I have pledged myself to His Majesty's ministers that should any set of men attempt to meet as a lodge without sanction, the Grand Master, or Acting Grand Master (whomsoever he might be), would apprise parliament'.¹¹⁵ Pitt himself reported to the House of Commons that the freemasons 'were very ready to acquiesce in any security the legislature would require from them for the tranquillity of the state'.¹¹⁶

However, it seems that Pitt probably also pointed out that the government had worrying information which suggested that the masons needed to be more vigilant. Among the documents which had been shown to the secret committee was a letter sent to the Home Office by John Waring, a catholic priest at Stonyhurst, who described how an Irishman named Bernard Kerr had told

¹¹⁴ Printed from the Historical Correspondence files at the Library and Museum of Freemasonry by T. O. Haunch, in his comment on H. H. Solf, 'The Origin and Sources of the Schroeder Ritual', *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum* 92 (1979), p. 100.

¹¹⁵ The letter in which Moira made this declaration is printed in full in David Murray Lyon, *History of the Lodge of Edinburgh embracing an account of the Rise and Progress of Freemasonry in Scotland* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood, 1873), p. 266

¹¹⁶ *The Senator* 23 (1799), p. 1461.

him he was 'a freemason, a Knight Templar, and belonged to a society of people who called themselves United Englishmen'. Kerr had shown him the printed rules of the United Englishmen, which he kept in a large portfolio together with his papers of admission as a Knight Templar.¹¹⁷ These concerns about connections between the United bodies and freemasonry were not idle. Many of the United Irishmen were freemasons and many features of their organisation, such as the use of oaths and secret signs, were drawn from masonic models.¹¹⁸

Moreover, the problems were not restricted to Irish masons. On 17 April, shortly before Pitt met the masonic deputation, James Greene, a freemason and lawyer staying in Leeds, wrote to the Home Secretary, describing a meeting of a lodge at Leeds. 'Being no stranger to the disaffected principles of too many in this place and especially among the lower class of freemasons', he wrote, 'I made it a point to visit a lodge of that class; and tho' politics are never introduced while the lodge is sitting, it became a topic out of the lodge when a part of the fraternity withdrew from the lodge room to supper, when a shrewd sensible fellow began to inveigh against the measures of the government, and

¹¹⁷ Public Record Office, HO 42/46, f. 363; cited by Thompson, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

¹¹⁸ Jim Smyth, 'Freemasonry and the United Irishmen' in Dickson, Keogh and Whelan, *op. cit.*, pp. 167-175.

spoke in very high terms in favour of the Cannibalian government in France, to which I exhibited a seeming pleasure. After the lodge was over, and since, I got a great deal of information from him by seeming to be one of that infernal class, and being desirous to obtain more, I begged to see him as often as he could make it convenient to talk matters over. He called upon me several times at my lodgings, and having given credit to the seeming sincerity of my attachment to that they call the cause, and confiding in my secrecy as a free mason, produced a letter from one of the leaders among the United Irishmen, dated Dublin the 31st of March ult[im]o.' This letter referred to a major United meeting which was to take place, under cover of a masonic gathering, at Paisley in Scotland. Greene concluded his letter as follows: 'Now my Lord, if your Grace will approve of it, as I am in the higher orders of masonry, and as I have every reason to believe that I can be of signal service in this matter, I will very readily undertake to conduct matters as occasion may serve so as to nip the evil in the bud, or let it run to such a length as may come to a riper maturity, and tho' there are too many rotten of the Craft fraternity, I can with great truth aver that the general part of the mass are strictly loyal'.¹¹⁹

The aftermath of Pitt's meeting with the masonic delegation suggests that he gave them the gist of the information received from Greene. Although it seems

that the lodge in Leeds was not an Antient lodge, it was the Antients who took these concerns most seriously, perhaps because of their greater strength in the north-western industrial towns, where the United groups were strongest, and their closer connections with Irish masonry. Immediately after the meeting with Pitt, the Grand Officers of the Antients met at the Crown and Anchor Tavern in the Strand. They agreed to recommend two emergency measures. The first was 'to inhibit and totally prevent all public masonic processions, and all private meetings of masons, or lodges of emergency, upon any pretence whatever, and to suppress and suspend all masonic meetings, except upon the regular stated lodge meetings and Royal Arch chapters, which shall be held open to all masons to visit, duly qualified as such'. It was also agreed 'that when the usual masonic business is ended, the lodge shall then disperse, the Tyler withdraw from the door, and formality and restraint of admittance shall cease'. These two measures were formally approved on 6 May at a Grand Lodge of Emergency, with the Duke of Atholl himself in the chair.¹²⁰

The actions of the Antients and the assurances given to Pitt convinced him that the Grand Lodges were determined to ensure that freemasonry could not be used

¹¹⁹ Public Record Office, HO 42/47, f. 51.

¹²⁰ Library and Museum of Freemasonry, Antient Minute Books, no. 4 (1796-1812): minute of meeting on 6 May 1799. This ban is also reported in Gould, *op. cit.*, 4, p. 452 and J. R. Clarke, 'External Influences on the Evolution of English Masonry', *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum* 82 (1969), p. 269.

as a front for radical activity, and at the committee stage of the bill Pitt himself accordingly introduced amendments to exempt them from the act.¹²¹ He proposed what was essentially a system of self-regulation operated by the Grand Lodges. The relevant clause read as follows:

‘...nothing in this act contained shall extend, or be construed to extend, to prevent the meetings of the Lodge or society of persons which is now held at Free Masons Hall in Great Queen Street in the County of Middlesex, and usually denominated The Grand Lodge of Freemasons of England, or of the Lodge or society of persons usually denominated The Grand Lodge of Masons of England, according to the Old Institution, or of the Lodge or society of persons which is now held at Edinburgh, and usually denominated The Grand Lodge of Free Masons of Scotland, or the meetings of any subordinate lodge or society of persons usually calling themselves Free Masons, the holding whereof shall be sanctioned or approved by any one of the above mentioned lodges or societies...’¹²²

¹²¹ *The Senator* 23 (1799), p. 1461.

¹²² This is from the bill as sent to the House of Lords following its third reading by the Commons, which is reproduced in facsimile in F. William Torrington, *House of Lords Sessional Papers Session 1798-9* (New York: Oceana Publications, 1974), 1, pp. 199-218. The exemptions initially proposed by Pitt initially covered only the two English Grand Lodges, and the exemption for the Scottish Grand Lodge was only added when the committee stage of the bill was

The amendment envisaged a system whereby the Grand Secretaries would each year deposit with the clerks of the

reported to the commons on 8 May: *The Senator* 23 (1799), p. 1465 (the reports in *The Senator* at this point appear more circumstantial and reliable than those in *The Parliamentary Register*, 3rd series 8 (1799), p. 556, which suggests that the committee had inserted exemptions only for the Antients, and that the exemptions for both the Moderns and Scottish Grand Lodge were added only when the committee stage of the bill was reported). Gould, *op. cit.*, 4, p. 487, citing Lyon, *op. cit.*, p. 267, notes that the bill was ‘much modified in its passage through Committee’, but does not attempt to trace details. Lyon’s account confuses matters by considering the insertion of the reference to Scottish Grand Lodge only in the context of the dispute between the Scottish Grand Lodge and Mother Kilwinning. He refers (pp. 266-7) to a remonstrance sent by the Lodge of Kilwinning to William Fullarton, the MP for Ayrshire, which protested about the fact that the bill referred only to the Grand Lodge in Edinburgh, while ‘another, more ancient and equally respectable, and remarkable for its attachment to the laws and constitution of the country (the Lodge of Kilwinning) was taken no notice of’. Mother Kilwinning assumed that this omission sprang from ignorance on Pitt’s part, and requested Fullarton ‘to make the necessary application, and through the proper channel, to have that lodge, and those holding charters from her, likewise exempted from the operations of this Bill’. Lyon suggests that the removal of the specific references to the Grand Lodges from the Act was due to this intervention on the part of Mother Kilwinning, but in fact, as is shown below, the removal of the references to the Grand Lodges in the House of Lords was due to doubts about the propriety of the proposed system of self-regulation. It seems likely that Fullarton took no notice of the remonstrance from Mother Kilwinning. There is no record of his speaking in any of the debates. Alternatively, he may have raised the matter privately with the government, and they may have refused to extend the exemptions.

peace a certificate containing details of the time and place of meeting of all approved lodges in the county, together with a declaration that the lodges were approved by the Grand Master. All lodges were to keep a book in which each member was to declare, on joining, 'that he is well affected to the constitution and government of this realm, by King, Lords, and Commons, as by law established'. This book was to be kept open for inspection by local magistrates. The Grand Lodges were thus to be made responsible for policing freemasonry; lodges whose names did not appear on the return made by the Grand Secretaries would be criminal conspiracies.

It was in this form that the bill went to the House of Lords, where it received its first reading on 10 May and its second on 3 June.¹²³ The bill went into committee in the House of Lords on 5 June. The debate was led by the Foreign Secretary, Lord Grenville. Much of the debate consisted of a detailed consideration of the regulations for the control of printing types and the effects of the legislation on catholic and non-conformist schools. A number of amendments were passed, the most notable of which was that the Gresham College lectures should enjoy the same immunity as the universities and

¹²³ *Lords' Journals* 42 (1798-9), pp. 200, 243; *The Parliamentary Register* 3rd series 8 (1799), pp. 637-642; *The Senator* 23 (1799), pp. 1582-1589.

Inns of Court.¹²⁴ No amendments were made to the clauses concerning freemasons, but concern was expressed about them in the course of the debate. Lord Grenville himself observed that 'With respect to the clause adopted by the other house of parliament for exempting societies of freemasons from the operations of the bill..., though he did not mean to propose setting it aside, yet it did not appear to him to be fraught with that clearness and certainty which he could wish. He was free to express his belief, that whatever the conduct of masonic societies in foreign countries might be (where in some instances designs of the most destructive tendency were brought to perfection) these societies in this country harboured no designs inimical to the state, or suffered or entertained such in their lodges. Yet what the clause provided was of an anomalous nature, and new to the functions of parliament. The officers, & c., of the subordinate lodges were to be approved by the grand master and others of the principal lodges before they could be entitled to hold their meetings. Now, how such officers, who were to have the licensing power, were to be constituted and appointed, that house, as a legislative assembly, knew nothing. It was not his own intent to propose any specific amendment to the clause; he only throw out the observation, in order that other lords, more

¹²⁴ *Lords' Journals* 42 (1798-9), pp. 246-9. The bill as amended by committee in the Lords is reproduced in facsimile in Torrington, *op. cit.*, pp. 243-262.

conversant in such matters, might if they were willing, come forward and suggest something...'¹²⁵

Grenville thus felt that the idea of self-regulation raised serious constitutional difficulties; it seemed to him inappropriate that Grand Officers should be given statutory authority effectively to license masonic lodges when parliament itself had no control over how those grand officers were appointed. The Duke of Norfolk, declaring himself to be a mason, expressed some alarm at Grenville's remarks and 'deplored the idea of setting aside the exempting clause, as tending to their annihilation.' Grenville assured Norfolk that he was not proposing removing the clauses, just asking for a better method of regulating lodges. Norfolk was unable to suggest a new formulation and proposed instead that the act last only for a year, which was unacceptable to Grenville.¹²⁶ The clauses concerning the freemasons survived the committee stage in the House of Lords, but the concerns raised by Grenville were soon to resurface and present a serious threat to freemasonry.

On 20 June, the bill came up for its third reading in the House of Lords.¹²⁷ The first speaker in the debate was the

¹²⁵ *The Senator* 23 (1799), p. 1592.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 1592-3.

¹²⁷ The fullest report of this debate is in *The Senator* 23 (1799), pp. 1728-1732, and all quotations are taken from this account unless otherwise stated. Another report is *The Parliamentary Register*, 3rd series, 9 (1799), pp. 26-8.

pedantic and cantankerous Earl of Radnor,¹²⁸ who proposed an amendment to drop the exemptions for freemasons. He said that 'Not being himself a mason, and having heard that they administered oaths of secrecy, he did not know, whether in times so critical as the present, it was wise to trust the freemasons any more than any other meetings'. He went on to add that 'their meetings were, in other countries at least, made subservient to the purposes of those *illuminati* who had succeeded in the overthrow of one great government, and were labouring for the destruction of all others. This he conceived to have been proved in a work some time since published by a very learned Professor (Dr Robinson), and he was desirous to guard against any similar practices in this country'.¹²⁹ It seems that this was the first point at which Robison's famous 1797 anti-masonic work was mentioned by name in the course of the discussion of the 1799 legislation.

The Duke of Atholl responded to Radnor, and, in the words of the report in *The Senator* 'defended with great

¹²⁸ *The Complete Peerage*, 10, p. 718 note d, cites a description of Lord Radnor by Beckford: '...queer looking punctilious...that Grand Borer after forms and precedents in the House of Lords and Dictator at Quarter Sessions and Turnpike meetings, by way of relaxation in the Country...cross grained, close fisted and a notorious driver after hard bargains...'

¹²⁹ *The Parliamentary Register*, 3rd series 9 (1799), p. 26

earnestness and ability the institutions of freemasonry'.¹³⁰ The fullest account of his speech is in *The Senator*, and is worth quoting at length:

'The Noble Duke contended, that the imputations thrown upon freemasons by the Noble Earl, on the authority of a recent publication, however justified by the conduct of the lodges on the continent, were by no means applicable to those of Great Britain. His Grace avowed, that the proceedings in masonic lodges, and all their obligation to secrecy simply related to their own peculiar little tenets and matters of form. There were no set of men in the kingdom, and he had the best opportunities of knowing, having had the honour to preside over a great part of them in England as well as in Scotland, who could possibly be more loyal or attached to the person of their sovereign or the cause of their country. There was nothing in the masonic institution hostile to the law, the religion or the established government of the country; on the contrary, they went to support all these, and no person who was not a loyal or religious man could be a good mason. Of those well established facts perhaps the Noble Earl was ignorant in consequence of his not being a mason, but they were strictly true: added to these considerations, the masonic system was founded on the

most exalted system of benevolence, morals, and charity, and many thousands were annually relieved by the charitable benevolence of masons. These very laudable and useful charities must necessarily be quashed did the bill pass into a law, as recommended by the Noble Earl. The very nature and foundation of freemasonry involved in them the most unshaken attachment to religion, unsuspected loyalty to sovereigns, and the practice of morality and benevolence, in the strictest sense of the words. To such regulations as went to prevent the perversion of their institution to the purposes of seditious conspiracy, he could have no objection, and as a proof of the readiness with which they would be acceded to by the masonic societies, he need only mention that this subject had occupied their attention for several years past...'

The Bishop of Rochester, Samuel Horsley, who produced a famous edition of Newton's works and was a former secretary of the Royal Society, spoke next. He declared that he was 'a member of the branch of masonry which existed in Scotland' and agreed with everything the Duke of Atholl had said: 'the innocence of these [masonic] institutions was unquestionable, and other objects which it embraced were of the most laudable nature'. However, this applied only to genuine and regular lodges in Britain and was not, in his view, true on the continent. There was a risk that continental influences could affect freemasonry in Britain: 'As secrecy was absolutely necessary, no person could say that the doctrine of innovation, which had diffused itself on the continent,

¹³⁰ The *Times* report of the debate is partially printed by W. Sharman in his comment on M. Brodsky, 'Some Reflections on the Origins of the Royal Arch', *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum* 102 (1989), pp. 128-9. He also mentions the comments of the Duke of Norfolk during the committee stage in the House of Lords.

had not found its way into this country'. The Bishop reminded the House that Robison had calculated that there were no less than eight illuminated lodges in Britain. He felt torn between his loyalties as a mason and his duty as a legislator, but in the end his obligations as a member of the House of Lords required him to support Lord Radnor, since 'By the bill as it then stood, the meetings of such lodges were sanctioned, or were approved by persons appointed they knew not how, or by whom; by individuals, however respectable they might be as such, of whom they, as a House of Parliament, had no cognizance'. In other words, the Bishop felt, as Grenville had earlier, that a responsible parliament should not countenance a system of self-regulation by the grand lodges.

What happened next is not clear. According to one account, Radnor's amendment was passed, and freemasonry in Britain was within an ace of becoming a criminal conspiracy.¹³¹ Whatever the exact sequence of events, the day was saved by Lord Grenville. Grenville proposed substituting the clause implementing a system of regulation by the grand lodges with others, 'the effect

¹³¹ *The Parliamentary Register*, 3rd series 9 (1799), p. 27, which suggests that Grenville introduced the amended clauses in order to rescue the situation after Radnor's amendment had been passed. The more precise account in *The Senator*, however, suggests that Grenville's compromise had been put forward before a vote was taken, and that Radnor's amendment was carried in order to allow Grenville's new clauses to be added to the bill as riders.

of which his Lordship stated in substance to be, to require that the objects and purposes of such lodges as should be permitted to meet, should be declared to be purely masonic, and only for the avowed objects of the institution, the principal ends of which he conceived to be those of charity and benevolence; that the mode of certifying should be, that two members of the lodge should make affidavit before two or more magistrates of the particular place where the lodge was held, and of the number and names of its members. That these accounts should be transmitted to the clerk of the peace, who should, once a year at least, furnish a general account of the whole within his district, to the magistrates sitting in quarter sessions, who should be empowered, in case of well-founded complaints against any particular lodge, to suppress its meetings'. The onus for regulation was thus to be shifted from the grand lodges to the justices of the peace, who would rely on certification by local lodges. All specific mention of the grand lodges in the bill would be removed, and it would refer only to 'the societies or lodges of Free Masons'.

The Duke of Atholl agreed to accept Grenville's compromise, and amendments in this form to the bill was passed,¹³² although Radnor still felt it necessary to enter

¹³² *Lords' Journals* 42 (1798-1800), p. 277. The Duke of Atholl's role in successfully defending freemasonry as a whole in this debate has been largely forgotten, and most of the credit has been given instead to Lord Moira. On 5 September 1799, the Antient Grand Lodge recognised Atholl's contribution by passing the following

resolution: 'that the thanks of the R.W. Grand Lodge be given to the Most Noble Prince the Duke of Atholl et co. et co. R. W. Grand Master for his very sincere uniform and unremitting attention to the honor and interest of the ancient craft and particularly for his care and attendance during the progress of the bill lately pending in parliament by whose exertions alone the Ancient Free Masons of this kingdom are indebted for the privilege and benefit of holding their meetings in conformity to the rules and orders of the said fraternity and that the same be fairly transcribed and transmitted to his Grace in the most respectful manner': Library and Museum of Freemasonry, Antient Grand Lodge Minutes, no. 4 (1796-1812) (partly printed in J. R. Clarke, *op. cit.*, p. 269). This minute is followed by a further vote of thanks to the Deputy Grand Master of the Antients: 'Resolved unanimously that the thanks of the RW Grand Lodge be given to Wm Dickey Esqre RW Deputy Grand Master and the rest of the Grand Officers now present for their uniform and steady attention to the honor and interest of the ancient craft particularly during the progress of the bill lately depending in parliament and the exigence of the present times.' The failure sufficiently to acknowledge Atholl's role in saving freemasonry in Britain from extinction seems to have rankled with the Antients. In 1802, following the collapse of negotiations for a union, various pamphlets attacking the Antients were distributed in London, including a reprint of resolutions passed against the Ancients by the Modern Grand Lodge in 1777. Robert Leslie, the Grand Secretary of the Ancients, wrote a furious letter to the Master of an Antient lodge in Peterborough about the reappearance of these resolutions: 'I was wholly ignorant that the records in Queen Street contained any such personalities and reflections against His Grace the Duke of Atholl or so much rancour against our Grand Lodge. His Graces Conduct in Parliament when he recently and nobly defended the Principles of Ancient as well as Modern Masonry Merited no such New insult as the Republication and delivery of the above Letters: and if such Rancour remained upon the Records of the Grand Lodge in Queen St

in the Journal of the House of Lords a formal protest against the exemptions for freemasonry.¹³³ The convoluted story of this piece of legislation was still, however, not concluded. When the Lords' amendments

it ought then if not long before been blotted out or buried in oblivion.': R. Leslie to Worshipful Master and Wardens of Antients Lodge No. 160, 16 September 1802: Library and Museum of Freemasonry, Returns (SN 1600).

¹³³ *Ibid.*: 'DISSENTIENTE. Because I cannot think it becomes the wisdom of any legislature, at any time, to recognise a society whose numbers, members, motives, tenets and pursuits are unknown to it, and studiously concealed, especially when concealed through the medium of oaths administered by assumed and therefore (in my opinion) unlawful authority; and much less that it becomes the prudence of this House to do so, at a time when it is notorious that the supposed obligation of such oaths has been the actual mean of the mischiefs which the societies suppressed by this bill have effected, and been endeavouring, as asserted by this bill, to effect in Ireland; and when it is still more notorious, that societies (the same in their origin, profession and their name) have been the instrument, by means of such oaths, and such secrecy, of shaking to their foundation, in a considerable part of Europe, every establishment, civil and ecclesiastical. The present innocency of this society, as existing in Great Britain, asserted in debate, but not proved (and for my part believed, but not known) ought not, in my opinion, even though it had been proved or known to have been the pretext for disfiguring so salutary a bill by an exception, and this a permanent exception, in its favour; since it is evident that the essential secrecy of the Society of Free Masons has a natural tendency to facilitate treasonable and seditious practices; and since it is historically true that it has already been the instrument of giving such practices effect to an unexampled extent. RADNOR'.

were communicated to the Commons, it was found that, by passing Grenville's new clauses, the Lords had exceeded their authority. The Speaker observed that these amendments imposed new burdens on the people, which was an exclusive privilege of the House of Commons. The only way of dealing with this problem was to shelve the old bill and bring forward a new one incorporating the revised clauses on freemasons, which would have to go through the entire parliamentary procedure again. The new bill was therefore brought forward later that day, and its process expedited, so that it received the royal assent on 12 July.¹³⁴

The grand lodges energetically circularised secretaries of lodges reminding them of their obligations under the act and providing pre-printed forms for the necessary declarations and returns.¹³⁵ Chapters of the Royal Arch

¹³⁴ *Commons' Journals* 54 (1798-9), pp. 712-6, 720, 723, 728; *Lords' Journals* 42 (1798-1800), pp. 317-8, 322, 324; *The Parliamentary Register*, 3rd series 9 (1799), p. 82; *The Senator* 23 (1799), p. 1793. It is striking that the Lords finally passed the bill against unlawful societies on the same day that they passed the Combination Acts - both pieces of legislation were apparently prompted by the government's concern to suppress large organisations administering oaths and run by elected officials, which were regarded as a frightening new political development.

¹³⁵ On 30 July 1799, the Modern Grand Lodge issued a communication from the Grand Master to all Masters of lodges, reprinting the terms of the act and providing a pro-forma for making the return. Similar forms were issued by Ancient Grand Lodge. The circular issued by the Grand Lodge of Scotland is reproduced in

also received similar circulars.¹³⁶ One odd side-effect of the hasty way in which the amendments had been passed was that only lodges which existed before 12 July 1799 were protected by the legislation.¹³⁷ This meant that the grand lodges could not authorise new lodges, and had to resort to the expedient of giving lodges the warrant and number of extinct lodges.¹³⁸ The measures of the 1799

Alexander Lawrie, *The History of Freemasonry* (Edinburgh: Alex Lawrie, 1804), pp. 270-7. In 1801, J. Modern wrote to William White, the Grand Secretary of the Moderns, asking if Anchor and Hope lodge, Bolton, might meet, as the Clerk of the Peace had refused to accept the annual return of members on the grounds that it was two or three days late: Library and Museum of Freemasonry, Historical Correspondence, 4/A/11.

¹³⁶ On 24 August 1799, Benjamin Cooper, the Grand Recorder, circularised Royal Arch chapters as follows: 'Excellent Companion, The following sheet having been sent to every lodge of freemasons in England, I send you a copy thereof, and on the other page you will find a form for registering your chapter, which you must cause to be filled up and delivered within the time limited, or you can no longer be allowed to meet.': Public Record Office, CHES 38/30.

¹³⁷ A point noted by Lawrie, *op. cit.*, p. 145, who noted that 'the progress of Free Masonry in Britain was retarded by an act of parliament in 1799, in which the fraternity was virtually prohibited from erecting new lodges in the kingdom'. Lawrie goes on to point out, however, that 'the exemptions which [the legislation] contained in favour of Free Masons, are a complete proof that government never credited the reports of these alarmists; but placed the most implicit confidence in the loyalty and prudence of British masons' (*loc. cit.*)

¹³⁸ This is discussed fully in J. M. Hamill, 'English Grand Lodge Warrants part 1', *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum* 90 (1977), pp. 104-6. See also Gould, *op. cit.*, 4, pp. 452, 487. The restriction lead to a

act were extended and refined by further legislation against subversive clubs in 1817,¹³⁹ and it was assumed that this resolved the problem about new lodges, but many years later this was found not to be the case.¹⁴⁰

The 1799 act was largely an exercise in closing stable doors after horses had fled.¹⁴¹ The United Irish were

flood of enquiries between 1800 and 1803 to the Grand Lodges about the procedure for setting up new lodges and obtaining warrants from dormant lodges: see e.g. Library and Museum of Freemasonry, Historical Correspondence, 1/F/13, 4/A/19, 5/B/4, 5/H/4, 5/H/10, 6/C/12, 6/C/16-17, 7/6/67. The inconvenience caused by this was considerable, and in 1803, Henry Jennet, the Provincial Grand Master of the Moderns for Bristol, wrote to the Grand Secretary, William White, urging him to 'get the restrictions taken from their Society and be again allowed to grant constitution warrants': Library and Museum of Freemasonry, Historical Correspondence, 3/A/8.

¹³⁹ 57 Geo. III c. 19 (clause 26 contains the exemption for freemasons, which was also extended to the Quakers and other religious meetings). The legislation is briefly noted in Gould, *op. cit.*, 4, p. 487.

¹⁴⁰ Public Record Office, HO 45/18359.

¹⁴¹ However, it should be noted that other organisations which had a ritual component were not as fortunate as the freemasons. The Home Office files include a number of documents describing the constitution of the United Order of Odd Fellows, suggesting that special attention was paid to them in April 1799: Public Record Office HO 42/47, ff. 180-192. These include a copy of 'The General Laws of the Noble Order of Odd Fellows', in which every reference to the use of secret words and signs or any kind of ritual has been struck through, suggesting that the Home Office put pressure on the Odd Fellows to discontinue such practices.

already regrouping into an even more secretive and militaristic organisation.¹⁴² London radicals resorted to holding informal tavern meetings which fell outside the scope of the legislation.¹⁴³ Even on occasions when the 1799 act might have been useful, other legislation was used. For example, the 1799 act would have been applicable in the case of the Tolpuddle Martyrs, who used oaths and rituals of initiation, and who sought to organise their 'General Society of Labourers' as lodges under the jurisdiction of a grand lodge.¹⁴⁴ However, the

¹⁴² Elliott, *op. cit.*, pp. 244-251.

¹⁴³ Wells, *op. cit.*, p. 52; Iain McCalman, 'Ultra Radicalism and convivial debating clubs in London, 1775-1838', *English Historical Review* 102 (1987), pp. 309-333.

¹⁴⁴ Rex v. Lovell and others: 6 Car. & P. 596-601; S.C.1 Moody & Rob. 349. One of the witnesses in the case described the ritual as follows: 'He asked if we were all ready. Some one answered, that we were; and he said, then, blind your eyes. We then all tied our handkerchiefs round our eyes, and being thus blindfolded, we were led into another room, where something was read to us by some person whom I did not know. I think, from the reading of it, it was out of the Bible; I don't recollect any part of it. We then knelt down, when a book was put in our hands, and an oath administered to us. I don't recollect what the oath was about. We then rose up and were unblinded, when the picture of death, or a skeleton, was shewn to us, upon which the prisoner James Lovell said 'Remember your end!' We were then blinded again, and again knelt down, when something was read out of a paper, but what it was I don't remember. I kissed a book when I was unblinded first. I saw George Lovell dressed in white; he had on him something like a parson's surplice'. The trade union was to be organised on masonic lines: 'there should be a lodge

Tolpuddle Martyrs were prosecuted under the 1797 Unlawful Oaths Act, not the 1799 legislation. Likewise, when prosecutions were brought against radical printers such as Richard Carlile (who wrote his well-known *Manual of Freemasonry* while imprisoned at Dorchester), charges of seditious libel or blasphemy were usually preferred.¹⁴⁵ Later, the 1799 and 1817 acts were easily circumvented by chartist organisations, which distributed advice on how to avoid prosecution under this legislation.¹⁴⁶

The main legacy of the 1799 act was the various returns made to the clerk of the

peace. The returns of printers, continued until 1865 when the restrictions on publications and reading rooms were lifted, are a vital source of information on the history of provincial publishing.¹⁴⁷ The returns of freemasons,

in every parish, a committee, a grand lodge, and contributions to support those who quit their work when desired by grand lodge'.

¹⁴⁵ See e.g. Joel H. Wiener, *Radicalism and Free thought in Nineteenth-Century Britain: the Life of Richard Carlile* (Westport and London: Greenwood Press, 1983), pp. 43-50, 175-6

¹⁴⁶ See e.g. Public Record Office, HO 45/289.

¹⁴⁷ Morgan, *op. cit.*, and 'English Provincial Imprints, 1799-1869', *The Library*, 5th series 21 (1966), pp. 60-2. The regulations on printers had been largely forgotten by the 1830s and were an occasional source of irritation to publishers and authors threatened with prosecution under legislation they had never heard of: see e.g. Public Record Office...The regulations on printers were largely repealed in 1869 by 32 & 33 Vict c 24, although the requirements still in force today for the printers name and address to appear on the title page, and for printers to keep an archive of their publications,

continued up to 1967 and still preserved in county record offices, have been little used as a source of masonic history.¹⁴⁸ The returns are probably fuller for the earlier

are rooted in the 1799 legislation. Paul Morgan points out ('English Provincial Imprints', p. 60) that the central register kept by the Home Office was destroyed in 1897 'on the grounds that the actual notices were filed with the Clerks of the Peace who granted the certificates'. However, in some cases the Clerks of the Peace did not retain the returns, so that this vital information for the history of provincial printing has disappeared. The Printers' Registrations for Warwickshire have been edited by Paul Morgan, *Warwickshire Printers' Notices*, ed. cit. The Printers Registration for Northumberland, Cumberland and the West Riding of Yorkshire have been tabulated by the History of the Book Trade in the North group: PH6 (March 1966), PH13 (1967) and PH 66 (1994).

¹⁴⁸ Honourable exceptions include W. Sharman, 'Early Jewish Masons in the Province of Northumberland', *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum* 100 (1987), p. 231. Family historians have, characteristically, shown much greater interest in the returns: see e.g. Pat Lewis, *My Ancestor Was a Freemason* (London: Society of Genealogists, 1999). Many lists of quarter session records, including brief lists of surviving returns, are now being made available online by county record offices as part of the Access to Archives project: www.a2a.gov.uk. However, most of the listings are of files of returns. It is possible that the original returns may not have been systematically kept, and that the enrolled returns are more comprehensive. The interest of these returns is nevertheless apparent from an inspection of the Access to Archives list of 1799 returns in the WR/SF series of the London Metropolitan Archives, Westminster Quarter Sessions records. These include the returns of the Ancients Grand Lodge (WR/SF/1799/15), the Modern grand Lodge (WR/SF/1799/16) and the Modern Grand Chapter (WR/SF/1799/16). While there are some returns from bodies that cannot be readily identified in Lane, such as WR/SF/1799/10, from

nineteenth century than later; in 1920 the London clerk of the peace estimated that only half the lodges made returns.¹⁴⁹ However, the 1799 act seems to have been appreciated by the Grand Lodges, which perhaps felt that it gave them some standing in law and also provided a potential means of proceeding against lodges acting irregularly.¹⁵⁰ In 1920, Grand Lodge circularised lodge

'Lodge no. 5 meeting at the King's Arms Tavern, Palace Yard, Westminster', other Westminster lodges apparently made no return, such as the Lodge of Stability, no. 217, and St Andrew's Lodge, no. 231.

¹⁴⁹ Public Record Office, HO 45/18359. According to H. Mendoza, 'The Articles of Union and the Orders of Chivalry', *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum* 93 (1980), pp. 63-4, for some time before the repeal of the act, Royal Arch Chapters had stopped making returns, considering presumably that the craft lodge certificate covered them.

¹⁵⁰ This is particularly evident in Scotland where the 1799 act provided the Grand Lodge with means to take legal action against seceding lodges: Lyon, *op. cit.*, pp. 264-80. These prosecutions were unsuccessful. In England, the curious pride taken in the passing of the exemptions is evident in, for example, the insertion on lodge certificates of slogans such as 'Masonry Universal Sanctioned by Parliament 1799': *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum*, 93 (1980), p. 47. J. Hamill comments on Sir James Stubbs's Prestonian lecture 'The Government of the Craft' that the Grand Lodges 'only managed to succeed in extracting regular annual returns from home lodges by the assistance of the 1799 Unlawful Societies Act which enabled them threaten lodges with the withdrawal of their warrants if they did not comply with the regulations concerning annual returns and registrations'. Stubbs in reply commented 'I wish I had thought of using the 1799 Act before Lord Scarman's committee got rid of it as a threat to dilatory Lodge Secretaries though in fact the gentle threat

secretaries reminding them to make their returns, prompting the secretary of a lodge in Clapton to write to Lloyd George urging him to repeal the old act.¹⁵¹ A more serious problem arose in 1939, when the deputy clerk of the peace in Essex wrote to lodges pointing out that only those founded before 12 July 1799 were entitled to exemption under the act. Counsel's opinion confirmed this view. The United Grand Lodge of England sought to promote a private bill creating a general exemption for freemasons from the act. The government was, however, apprehensive about changing this legislation by private bill. A Home Office official observed that the old act could still be useful against the I.R.A. and Fascist organisations. In any case, in wartime there was no parliamentary time for legislation of this kind. A compromise was agreed whereby the Attorney General agreed not to prosecute any freemasons' lodges under the terms of the act, and clerks of the peace were asked to accept returns without comment.¹⁵² Consequently, it was not only until the major criminal law reform of the 1967

of being reported to the Board of General Purposes was generally sufficient': *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum*, 95 (1982), p. 77.

¹⁵¹ Public Record Office, HO 45/18359: letter from Frank Orfleur, secretary of the Clapton lodge, no. 1365, to David Lloyd George, 29 April 1920.

¹⁵² Public Record Office, HO 45/18359; FS 23/259; LCO 2/1223. Another copy of the 'Freemasons Lodges Bill' of 1939 is in the Library and Museum of Freemasonry, Great Queen Street.

Criminal Justice Act that the 1799 Unlawful Societies Act was finally repealed.¹⁵³

¹⁵³ As late as 1965, a detailed explanation of why lodge secretaries had to make annual returns to the Clerk of the Peace appeared in *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum* 78 (1965), pp. 276-7.

Freemasonry and the Problem of Britain

Inaugural lecture to mark the launch of the Centre for Research into Freemasonry at the University of Sheffield, 5 March 2001

Most inaugural lectures draw together research which has been in progress for many years. This inaugural lecture is unusual in that it marks the launch of a new programme of research, with the establishment here at Sheffield of the Centre for Research into Freemasonry, the first such centre in a British university. I will not this evening be presenting the fruits of years of reflection on the subject of freemasonry, but will instead seek to convey why this is an exciting new area for research. I will, however, take advantage of one tradition of the inaugural lecture and begin with some personal reflections.

I was born in Battersea, an unremarkable area of south London, which was until the early nineteenth century a peaceful country village. One of the few surviving relics of Battersea's rural existence is the beautiful riverside church of St Mary, a Georgian building which incorporates remnants of an earlier medieval church. When my great grandfather moved to London, he became verger of this church, and my family have been associated with it ever since, my father holding a number of church offices there. Like many historians, my appetite for the past was first whetted by local history. This was due to my father, who was an enthusiastic local

historian. In his researches, my father drew heavily on a book published in 1925 called *Our Lady of Batersey* by John George Taylor, the headmaster of a grammar school known locally as Sinjuns. *Our Lady of Batersey* is a history of St Mary's church and, weighing in at 442 heavily footnoted pages, is perhaps the most detailed study ever written of a single parish church, earning Taylor a doctorate and election to the Society of Antiquaries. Taylor's book was privately printed by a Chelsea stationer and is difficult to obtain. My father's copy was his most precious possession, and I am sure that my ambition to be a historian owes something to the awe with which I regarded that thick black book. I suppose it was inevitable that, when the time came for me to attend secondary school, my preference should be for Taylor's old school, Sinjuns.

And so I began on the path which thirty five years later brought me to the University of Sheffield with a brief to investigate the history of freemasonry. For anyone interested in freemasonry, the first port of call is the remarkable Library and Museum of Freemasonry in Freemasons Hall London, one of London's hidden treasures. When confronted by a library containing extensive archives which have been little used by historians and thousands of rare publications, many of which have escaped the bibliographical net, the main problem is knowing where to start. I was dimly aware that there was a masonic lodge associated with my old

school, and finding out something about the Old Sinjuns lodge seemed as good a starting point as any.

I quickly found a history of the lodge, Old Sinjins, no. 3232, by John Nichols, a history master at the school. The lodge was formed in 1907 after a circular had been sent to members of the Old Boys Association, pointing out how a masonic lodge would weld 'in the closer ties of fraternal good will those friendships which many of us formed during our school life'. To my surprise, I found that one of the first recruits to the lodge was J. G. Taylor, the author of *Our Lady of Batersey*. Taylor was master of the lodge in 1923 and, as headmaster of the school, arranged for a lodge meeting to be held in the school hall. Until 1954, the lodge always included at least one member of staff of the school. Among the lodge possessions were items with interesting school associations, such as a box of working tools made in the school woodwork shops from old school desks. The lodge endowed school prizes and helped the school purchase the portrait of the founder and his wife which hung in the school hall. The lodge held services at St Mary's church, and at least three vicars of the church became members of the lodge. The lodge's usual place of meeting was until 1911 the Gaiety Restaurant in the Strand and thereafter Pagani's Restaurant, also in the Strand. Following bomb damage to Pagani's in 1940, the lodge moved to Freemasons Hall. It still survives, meeting nowadays in the Duke of York's barracks in

Chelsea. The masonic lodge has thus outlived the school, which closed in 1986.

At the end of Nichols' book, I noticed that an earlier lodge history had been compiled by John George Taylor. This was, to me, an amazing piece of information - I knew that none of the major research libraries possessed any such work by Taylor. I checked the card catalogue at Freemasons Hall and there indeed was this work by Taylor. I ordered it up, and was presented with a mint copy of a handsomely produced volume in a distinguished blue binding. The Freemasons' Hall copy of Taylor's book is the only publicly accessible copy in existence. It was published by the same printer as *Our Lady of Batersey* and looks almost like a supplementary volume to it. Taylor's distinction as a historian is evident even in this short lodge history. It begins with a very well informed account of the development of school lodges which anticipates more recent findings of masonic scholars, and contains a short history of the school which is more rounded than that given in *Our Lady of Batersey*.

I do not expect you to share my enthusiasm for the works of J.G. Taylor, but the identification of this forgotten work by a significant topographical scholar seems to me emblematic of the remarkable discoveries that can be made by investigating the records of freemasonry. The finds I was able to make for Battersea - and the Sinjuns trail led me down many other interesting paths that I won't bother you with now - can be repeated for almost

every town and city in Britain. In investigating the Old Sinjins lodge, the feature I found most striking was the way in which freemasonry was portrayed as an accepted part of everyday life. Restaurants like the Gaiety or Pagani's went out of their way to cater for the masonic trade, having their own masonic temples and offering rooms where lodges could store their equipment. The masonic lodge was part of school life. Masonic rituals were practiced in the headmaster's study, and the making of lodge equipment was an acceptable woodwork project. Sinjuns was not unique in offering school facilities for masonic purposes. When the Federation of School Lodges was formed in 1947, the first meeting was held at another Battersea grammar school, Emmanuel School, with the active support and encouragement of the Headmaster and Chairman of Governors.

It is only in the past seventy years that freemasonry has lost its public face. Until then, public masonic processions, most often held in connection with the laying of foundation stones and the opening of new buildings, were a familiar feature of town life. In 1797, the opening of the general infirmary at Sheffield was marked by an enormous masonic procession, in which freemasons from all over the north of England were joined by the local clergy, the cutlers' company and an enormous number of sick clubs and friendly societies. The well-being of a masonic lodge was a matter of local concern. In 1821 at Monmouth, news that disciplinary action against the local lodge had been suspended so that

it would be able to join a procession was greeted, much to the embarrassment of the Master of the lodge, with the ringing of church bells. These processions continued into the twentieth century. In 1910, the year in which Keir Hardie was reelected as one of the M.P.'s for Merthyr Tydfil and which saw the beginnings of the industrial conflict leading afterwards to the disturbances at Tonypandy, masons from all over South Wales processed through the streets of Merthyr to lay the foundation stone of a new masonic hall, the proceedings being watched with great interest by the Mayor and Mayoress and enthusiastically reported in the local paper. The laying of the foundation stone of the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre at Stratford upon Avon in 1929 was again attended with full masonic ceremonies.

Given the local prominence of freemasonry and the strong topographical tradition of British historical scholarship, the neglect of freemasonry by British historians is surprising. It is now more than thirty years since the distinguished Oxford historian John Roberts published his inspiring rallying cry in the *English Historical Review*, 'Freemasonry: the Possibilities of a Neglected Topic'. Roberts pointed out that freemasonry began in Britain and that the first grand lodge was established in London in 1717. From England, it spread rapidly though Europe, and by 1789 there was perhaps 100,000 masons in Europe. Roberts emphasised that, despite the fact that freemasonry is one of the social movements of British origin which has had the biggest

international impact, it has been largely ignored by professional historians in Britain. This contrasts with, say, France and Holland, where freemasonry has been the subject of elaborate scholarly investigation. Because of the neglect of this field by British historians, it has been dominated by, on the one hand, anti-masonic conspiracy theorists, and, on the other, by masonic antiquarians investigating details of ritual or institutional development. Since Roberts wrote, the area has received more attention from professional historians in Britain. Major studies on different aspects of the history of freemasonry have appeared by such scholars as David Stevenson, James Steven Curl and, most recently, Peter Clark. Nevertheless, the study of freemasonry is still seen as by many British historians as a marginal subject, and its many historical connections remain largely unexplored.

Both Roberts and Stevenson suggest that this neglect is partly because the enormous literature produced by masonic scholars is baffling and confusing for historians. Many historians are certainly discouraged by articles in masonic journals with such titles as 'Passing the Veils' or 'The Mystery of the Winding Staircase'. However, there are perhaps broader intellectual reasons for this neglect. Masonic scholars are obsessed with discovering the origins of the craft. Sir Walter Besant was one of the founders of the English masonic lodge devoted to research, Quatuor Coronati lodge, no. 2076. Besant declared that he was not an enthusiast for the rites and

ceremonies of freemasonry, but felt that it had great potential as a force for social and religious improvement. He considered that a great defect of freemasonry was that its origins were imperfectly understood and, in helping to found Quatuor Coronati, he hoped to put this right. The results have been perhaps the opposite of what Besant intended. Enthusiasts constantly chew over the same slender evidence of early freemasonry, elaborating theories of its origins which range from the over-pragmatic to the over-fantastical. These activities are not helped by the recurrent assumption that the rituals preserve a hidden spiritual truth handed down from ancient times. The results are very reminiscent of Shakespearean authorship mania, and it comes as no surprise to find that one theory suggests that Shakespeare invented freemasonry. Like discussions of Shakespearean authorship, these theories often rely heavily on cyphers, numerology and singular coincidences, and, because the questions considered are posed in such a way as to anticipate the answers, the lines of argument are frequently self-validating. In the case of both Shakespeare and freemasonry, the saddest aspect of this feverish activity is that it is completely pointless. Just as it would make very little difference to our perception of Shakespeare's plays if it could be proved that Bacon wrote them, so our appreciation of the historical impact of freemasonry would be little changed if it could be showed beyond doubt that it stemmed from the Pharoahs or the Templars.

The obsession with origins has, paradoxically, robbed freemasonry of its history. The focus on the early period means that we neglect the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when freemasonry was a major force in society and there is extensive documentary evidence of its activities. Of course, this later period poses its own dangers. There is a risk of producing inward-looking and self-obsessed institutional history. The only way of avoiding this is by anchoring the investigation of freemasonry within broader historical problems. It is when freemasonry is considered within these wider themes that its richness as a historical subject becomes apparent. For example, freemasonry is an important aspect of imperial history. Army regiments formed masonic lodges, and, as these military lodges moved around with the regiment, they rapidly spread freemasonry through the colonies. Freemasonry became, with gothic architecture and organised sports, one of the forces which bound together the British Empire. Mixed race lodges were one of the chief forums in which coloniser and colonised could mix socially. As countries jostled for control of a particular territory, so their grand lodges also vied to establish themselves as the supreme masonic authority in the area. Conversely, as colonies demanded greater autonomy, so their masons also tried to secure more independence.

With its central secretariat and provincial hierarchies, freemasonry was organisationally very advanced. The organisational structure of freemasonry influenced

groups such as the United Irishmen, and this is perhaps the sphere in which freemasonry has had its most significant historical impact. Moreover, rituals and oaths which are reminiscent of masonic forms are found in many early trade unions and friendly societies. The oaths and rituals for which the Tolpuddle Martyrs were prosecuted were very similar to those used by freemasons. It is not clear whether freemasonry was the source of these features or if they represent an older common tradition, but this is clearly a major area for investigation. One concern of historians of radical activity in the nineteenth century has been to establish how far there was continuity between the various radical groups. One such common thread which has been overlooked is an interest in freemasonry. Tom Paine wrote on freemasonry, seeing it as a relic of the ancient sun religion destroyed by christianity. Richard Carlile, the populariser of Paine's work, took up this theme at greater length. He apparently influenced Charles Bradlaugh, who became a mason (resigning in protest at the appointment of the Prince of Wales as Grand Master). Bradlaugh's interest in freemasonry as a force for social reform may partly account for Annie Besant's involvement with it. Besant helped introduce from France a form of freemasonry which admitted both men and women.

Mention of Annie Besant raises another major issue, that of gender, and the way in which freemasonry has helped shape gendered hierarchies in society. There are

innumerable other possible themes that could be mentioned: the role of freemasonry in philanthropy, in education, in underpinning the social position of the aristocracy, and so on. This evening I want to concentrate on just one such historical problem, an issue which is still central to the intellectual concerns of history as a discipline, namely that of how nations are formed and how they function. For British historians, this problem is a very current one, thanks largely to Linda Colley, who, in her book *Britons: the Forging of A Nation*, argues that the concept of Britishness is an artificial construct, forged in the wake of the union between England and Scotland in 1707, tempered by the Hanoverian succession and the defeat of the Jacobite rebellions, and burnished by a succession of wars against France. Colley is the most influential of a large number of historians ranging from Raphael Samuel to Norman Davies who have recently investigated what I have called in the title of my lecture tonight the problem of Britain, namely the issue of how British national identity was constructed from the diverse national and regional groups who inhabit the British Isles.

Anyone interested in the history of freemasonry will encounter this historical problem very quickly. One of the essential starting points for the study of freemasonry is David Stevenson's magisterial study *The Origins of Freemasonry: Scotland's Century, 1590-1710* in which Stevenson draws attention to the wealth of documentation for lodges in Scotland in seventeenth

century. Stevenson argues that 'in spite of much obscurity, the evidence indicates that something that is recognisably modern freemasonry first emerges in seventeenth-century England, and then spreads to England'. The early development of freemasonry in Scotland is closely linked to the figure of William Schaw, Master of the King's Works under James VI. At the beginning of his book, Stevenson points out how the importance of the Scottish evidence had previously been played down, sometimes deliberately. He gives a startling illustration of this in the publication history of the standard nineteenth-century history of freemasonry by Robert Freke Gould (I quote): 'Gould very sensibly dealt with early Scottish freemasonry before early English freemasonry, as so much Scottish evidence predated English evidence. But the heretical implications of this arrangement were too much for English twentieth-century masonic editors. Consciously or unconsciously responding to their built-in assumptions of English primacy, chapters were swapped around so that early Scottish freemasonry was considered not only after English but after Irish freemasonry! No doubt this arrangement was justified by the order in which the national grand lodges were founded, but the result is an absurdity'. Stevenson has also described how English masonic scholars produced convoluted explanations to account for the fact that all the earliest surviving lodge records were Scottish. 'My favourite explanation', he wrote, 'was that English lodges had existed for so long that they had given up bothering to keep records. In

Scotland, the lodges...kept minutes because writing was something pretty new to the beknighted Scots.'

Shortly after its establishment in 1717, the Grand Lodge in London issued a rule book called *The Book of Constitutions*, compiled by James Anderson, a presbyterian clergyman. Anderson explicitly links the creation of the Grand Lodge to the Hanoverian succession. He writes: 'King George I entered London most magnificently on 20th September 1714 and after the rebellion was over AD 1716 the few lodges at London finding themselves neglected by Sir Christopher Wren thought fit to cement under a Grand Master as the centre of union and harmony'. As befits somebody who wrote a Latin elegy for George I, Anderson takes every opportunity to present the prosperous state of freemasonry as reflecting the flourishing state of Britain under the rule of the 'Saxon kings', as he calls them. His concluding paragraphs echo the kind of new British rhetoric which Linda Colley has catalogued at length. In Anderson's words: 'And now the freeborn British nations, disengaged from wars, and enjoying the good fruits of liberty and peace, the Brothers of the Royal Art have much indulged their bright genius for true antient masonry...'. For Anderson, freemasonry helped cement the British nation, 'made so firm, that the whole body resembles a well-built arch of the beautiful Augustan stile.'

Anderson's was not the only view of freemasonry, however. In France, Jacobite exiles brought freemasonry with them, and a rival masonic rhetoric developed. Andrew Ramsay, employed by the Old Pretender as tutor to his son, became an active and prominent freemason in France. In a famous oration before the French Grand Lodge in 1737, Ramsay enunciated a view of freemasonry which was radically different to that of Anderson. He stressed the international and catholic character of freemasonry. He stated that freemasonry had been created by the crusaders to help bind individuals of different nations in a common fraternity in order to create a new spiritual empire of virtue and science.

Freemasonry had been lost to Europe because of the strife of the religious wars, but the true faith had been preserved in Scotland, which was now bringing freemasonry back to Europe. The use of freemasonry as a battle ground between Hanoverian loyalists and Jacobites was not confined to the kind of shadow boxing we can see in the works of Anderson and Ramsay. In 1722, an attempt was made by Jacobites to infiltrate the London Grand Lodge. On the continent, freemasonry provided a useful cover for Jacobite conspiracy, and papal condemnations of freemasonry in the eighteenth century were largely prompted by the need to rein in Jacobite hotheads.

Linda Colley sees the concept of Britishness as emerging from precisely the kind of dialectic that is evident from the works of Anderson and Ramsay, and clearly the

history of freemasonry may potentially assist in elaborating the Colley thesis. However, for Colley, the modern nation of Britain is very much an Anglo-Scottish creation. It is striking how, in Colley's book, little attention is given to Wales. There are just 23 references in the index to Wales and the Welsh language. It does not seem credible that, if the period 1707-1837 really saw the invention of British nationality, the third major national grouping in Britain made such a limited contribution to the process. Further examination of the Welsh situation raises serious doubts about whether the Colley thesis as a whole is a viable. Above all, there is the matter of language. In 1801, at least 80% of the population of Wales and Monmouthshire were still Welsh speakers, with a high proportion of monoglots. It is difficult to see how one can talk about a British nation having been created while such a large separate linguistic grouping remained. Moreover, Welsh literature and culture still fostered a strong sense of an alternative mythology of nationhood, looking back to the romantic tradition of the bards, Prince Madoc and the Mabinogion, which represented a different view of Britain to that being developed in England and Scotland. Wales had undergone great changes in the eighteenth century, principally the development of its fissural and populist non-conformity, but it is difficult to see how these changes feed into the overall picture described by Colley. If one is to see a point at which Wales becomes more firmly absorbed into British nationhood it is probably in the 1890s, when the percentage of Welsh speakers for the

first time falls below 50% and a more integrated Anglo-Welsh society (what Gwyn Williams has called Imperial Wales) emerges. But by this time there was already a significant demand for greater autonomy for Wales. One is left wondering whether the kind of integrated British nation described by Colley ever actually existed.

The history of Welsh freemasonry reinforces the point that the framework of national development when considered from a Welsh perspective may be very different to that which adopts a primarily Anglo-Scottish view. Although Welsh freemasonry, unlike Scotland, falls under the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge in London, it is treated administratively like an English county, and the Grand Lodge is known as the United Grand Lodge of England. From the point of view of the history of freemasonry, Wales is perhaps most interesting as the dog that didn't bark. For a long time, freemasonry could find no firm footing in Wales. Although a lodge was established in Carmarthen as early as 1724, and the provinces of North Wales and South Wales were among the earliest established by the Grand Lodge, at a time when freemasonry was spreading like wildfire through Europe and America, in Wales it made very little impact. The handful of lodges which were established were generally introduced by outsiders. These lodges were small, prone to internal quarrels, and short-lived. By 1850, freemasonry was on the verge of disappearing altogether in Wales. It was only in the late 19th century, in Imperial Wales, that Welsh freemasonry finally began

to flourish. This chronology seems to mirror the overall pattern of integration of Wales into a broader British nation, and suggests that we require a more sophisticated view of the process of formation of national identity than one which restricts the process to the period 1707-1837.

The complex cross-currents which contributed to Welsh national formation are illustrated by the role of the London Welsh. Extensive Welsh immigration to London made it a dominant centre of Welsh culture in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As new ideas of Britishness stressing the Anglo-Scottish nexus emerged in the eighteenth century, there was a risk that Wales would be marginalised. This problem was exacerbated by the fact that the Welsh gentry included a number of Jacobite sympathisers whose loyalties were suspect. It was the London Welsh who first responded to these pressures in ways which would profoundly influence Welsh culture.

In February 1715, an announcement appeared in the London Gazette that a service would be held on March 1st at St Paul's, Covent Garden, where a sermon would be preached in the Ancient British language. This would be followed by a procession to Haberdashers Hall, where a President and Stewards would be elected and future commemorations arranged. This initiative marked not only St David's Day but also the coincidence that March 1st was the birthday of the Princess of Wales. The occasion was used to produce Hanoverian propaganda

for Wales; 4,000 copies of the sermon were sent to Wales 'to be dispersed among the common people...that they might be instructed in the duties of brotherly love and loyalty to the King in their own language'. Thus was born the Society of Ancient Britons, and the annual St David's day procession became a familiar feature of London life. The Society became an important charitable body, establishing a school for the children of impoverished Welsh in London. The Society of Ancient Britons predated the formation of the English Grand Lodge by two years, and it performed for the London Welsh many similar social functions to freemasonry: a formal social gathering, a charitable role, and a visible demonstration of Hanoverian loyalty. However, as the Society grew more prosperous, its character changed. The charitable component became more important, and the commitment to the Welsh language weakened, with the St David's day sermon being given by courtly bishops in English.

Irritation at the anglicised respectability of the Ancient Britons helped prompt the formation of the Honourable Society of the Cymmrodorion in 1751 by Richard Morris of the Navy Office, a native of Anglesey. Richard was one of three remarkable brothers who played an important part in preserving and revitalising Welsh literary culture. It was said that another reason for the establishment of the Cymmrodorion (which means aborigines) was pique after the eldest Morris brother, Lewis, had failed in his candidature for the Royal Society. Although the Cymmrodorion had strong social

and charitable components, its primary function was the discussion of Welsh literature and history in the Welsh language. The rules outline an ambitious programme of study and proposed the formation of a Welsh library and museum. Members of the Cymmrodorion had to swear an oath in Welsh and undergo a rite of initiation. This may seem reminiscent of freemasonry, but such proceedings were common in clubs at this time and do not necessarily indicate masonic influence. However, the Cymmrodorion sought to provide in the Welsh language a similar mix of social, charitable and intellectual activities to that offered by freemasons lodges, and it is not surprising that the London Welsh were more inclined to support the Cymmrodorion than the freemasons.

Although both the honorary chief presidents of the Society, William Vaughan and Sir Watkin Williams Wynne II, were freemasons, few of the active members of the Cymmrodorion were freemasons. The only significant figure to become involved with freemasonry was Goronwy Owen, a poet whose ideas on epic poetry profoundly influenced Welsh poetry for nearly a hundred years. Owen was a demanding man, probably an alcoholic, who ended up as a tobacco planter in America. He became a freemason while he was a curate at Walton near Liverpool. He wrote enthusiastically about his new hobby to William Morris, stating that 'the chief thing that urged me to look into this secret craft was that I fully believed it to be a branch of my old ancestors, the Druids of yore, and I didn't guess badly'. The Morris were

unconvinced, however, and preferred to concentrate on the Cymmrodorion. The society did not long survive the death of Richard Morris, and was replaced by various other groups. There is a strong sense, however, in which the Society of Ancient Britons, the Cymmrodorion and its successor bodies represented an independent response by the London Welsh to the same cultural trends which prompted the formation of Grand Lodge, and in some respects these London Welsh clubs and societies can be seen as a kind of parallel freemasonry. It seems that a kind of symbiotic relationship emerged between the London Welsh institutions and freemasonry. The meeting which reestablished the Cymmrodorion in 1820 was held in the Freemasons' Tavern in Great Queen Street, a regular meeting place of the London Welsh, which has been described as 'the *locus originis* of some of the most important Welsh cultural and educational movements of the nineteenth century'. Moreover, some eisteddfods were held at this time in Freemasons' Hall. Whether this was more than just coincidence cannot be established.

The ambiguities of the relationship of the London Welsh to freemasonry are encapsulated in the figure of Edward Williams, whose bardic name was Iolo Morganwg, 'Ned of Glamorgan'. Iolo was a South Welsh stonemason who became one of the most accomplished Welsh lyric poets. Iolo lived in London from 1773 to 1777 and 1791 to 1795, organising bardic ceremonies on Primrose Hill. In his determination to ensure the survival of a vibrant

Welsh literary culture, Iolo produced many pastiches of medieval Welsh poetry and manuscripts. How far his visionary forgeries were influenced by the laudanum he took for his asthma is not clear. Iolo's forgeries were taken as genuine historical discoveries until very recently. He claimed to have found in Raglan Castle old manuscripts describing the rights and privileges of an order of bards. He believed that he was the sole survivor of this ancient gorsedd of bards and successfully established it as part of the eisteddfod. The gorsedd still forms an important component of the national eisteddfod. The rituals, secret signs and three bardic orders devised by Iolo are strongly reminiscent of freemasonry. Iolo's critics denounced the gorsedd as 'pure freemasonry' and accused Iolo himself of being a freemason, a charge he hotly denied. In fact, it seems that Iolo's fevered imagination drew on many sources, the most important of which was the Friendly Society of Ancient Druids which had recently been formed in London. If there was any masonic influence on Iolo, it came perhaps by this route.

Iolo lived near Cowbridge, a small town between Cardiff and Bridgend. He perhaps witnessed a scene in 1765 described by the diarist, William Thomas: 'The first of this month was held at the Bear in Cowbridge, the Society of Free Masons, being in all about 24, and went to Cowbridge church by two and two, in their white aprons, with their trowels, hammers and other instruments as belong to masonry, according to their rank

in the fraternity...A great crowd admiring and looking at the sight, being the like never before seen here'. Thomas thus presents the masonic procession at Cowbridge as something novel and strange. His diary contains mordant pen portraits of many local inhabitants, and he notes that some were freemasons. In these entries, he again portrays freemasonry as exotic and alien, as in his comments on Thomas Matthews, who had died in London: 'He was a freemason and when a youth a very wild sort of a man, but of good memory in what he read, but esteemed the Bible as an old story as folks report, and somewhat melancholy the last years of his life.'

Thomas's depiction of freemasonry as alien and marginal accurately reflects its position in eighteenth-century Wales. Few lodges were established and these were mostly short-lived. This is epitomised by the lodge at Wynnstay near Wrexham. Wynnstay was the seat of the Wynn family, owners of a vast estate who were effectively the kings of North Wales. The freemasons' lodge was established by the fourth baronet, who took a close interest in the preparations, asking Grand Lodge for the warrant to be 'wrote finely upon vellum' and demanding its prompt dispatch. Sir Watkin was an ornament of the London cultural world - an enthusiastic amateur actor, a friend of David Garrick, a promoter of musical concerts, and an artistic patron. He made Wynnstay a smart place to visit, building a private theatre on the estate. The masonic lodge seems to have been just like the theatre, another fashionable amenity. It

did not put down strong roots in the locality, and expired shortly after Sir Watkin's death.

Ports such as Swansea and Haverfordwest provided more fertile ground for freemasonry. The story of the Beaufort and Indefatigable lodges in Swansea illustrates many of the issues associated with early freemasonry in Wales. The Beaufort Lodge was established in Swansea in 1769. It got off to a bad start. Some of those who had signed the petition for the lodge were not regular masons, and the Deputy Provincial Grand Master had to travel over from Carmarthen to rectify the situation. Then the Master embezzled the lodge funds, including money owed to Grand Lodge. At this point, Gabriel Jeffries took charge. Jeffries was a member of the town council and afterwards served as portreeve, the equivalent of mayor. When a trust was set up to improve Swansea Harbour, he became the clerk and quickly demonstrated great financial acumen. Jeffries' first act in trying to rescue the Beaufort lodge was to try and get in the good books of Grand Lodge by sending three barrels of oysters to the Grand Secretary. He also sent a long list of equipment he wanted for the lodge. He was willing to use his own considerable financial resources to make the Swansea lodge the match of any in London. A surviving account shows that money was no object. A visit of the Cowbridge masons to Swansea was marked by an enormous feast, the ringing of the church bells and the firing of guns. Opulent lodge furniture was purchased, including such exotic items as gilt pomegranites and a

sword so huge that no box could be found to transport it. Jeffries persuaded many local dignitaries to join the lodge, including members of the council and the local MP. He drew up plans for a masonic hall which he declared would compare with any in England. Jeffries' motives appear to have been partly civic - he hoped that the provincial grand lodge would be moved from Carmarthen to Swansea - and partly personal - he wanted to be a provincial officer himself.

Then Jeffries lost interest. The lodge rapidly declined and by 1800 was virtually defunct. In that year, George Bowen, a painter who had been master of a lodge in London, moved to Swansea and decided to start a more vigorous lodge. He met many other newcomers to Swansea, particularly visiting sailors from Scotland and Ireland, who agreed that this busy port should have an active lodge. Statutory restrictions at this time meant that new lodge warrants could not be issued, and new lodges had to take over the warrants of defunct lodges. The Grand Secretary in London suggested that Bowen should ask Jeffries for the warrant of the Beaufort lodge. Bowen went to see Jeffries, who regarded the interloper with suspicion and made difficulties about handing over the Beaufort warrant and equipment. So Bowen tried Neath, where a lodge established by Jeffries under the patronage of the local landowners, the Mackworth family, was also virtually defunct. With Sir Digby Mackworth's agreement, the Neath lodge was transferred to Swansea and renamed the Indefatigable. At this point, Jeffries

threatened to prosecute Bowen for establishing an illegal lodge, an offence then punishable by transportation. Finding his trade badly affected by this dispute, Bowen brought actions for slander against Jeffries and his associates. Dissuaded from continuing his actions by Grand Lodge, Bowen left Swansea on business, and the new lodge almost collapsed. It rallied on his return, and somehow managed to stagger through, despite the continued jibes of Jeffries. The lodge remained very dependent on mariners from across the Bristol Channel, particularly Somerset, Devon and Cornwall. Bowen's final letter to Grand Lodge makes the difficulties of trying to introduce freemasonry to Wales very clear. In London, he wrote, masters 'are supported by able and well experienced officers past and present, each of them knowing well their respective duty. The reverse is my situation, my wardens are young in masonry and younger in office and for the want in experience in the grand and fundamental part are but of little service to me...even the whole of the writing necessary for conducting the lodge is all and must be performed by myself...'

The most concerted attempt before 1840 to introduce freemasonry on a large scale to Wales was the work of one man, Benjamin Plummer, a merchant from Somerset. Plummer was initiated into freemasonry in 1798 in the Royal Athelstan lodge in London, an Antients lodge. At this time, English freemasonry was split between two rival grand lodges. In 1751, a group of largely Irish masons who had been unable to join lodges operated by

the Grand Lodge formed in 1717 established their own Grand Lodge which claimed to represent an older form of masonic practice. The Antients became particularly popular among artisans and tradesman, with strong support in the industrial towns of north west England. Eventually, in 1813 the two Grand Lodges were reconciled and the United Grand Lodge of England was established. Plummer rose rapidly through the ranks of the Antients. In 1803, he became Master of the Royal Athelstan lodge. The following year he was appointed to a national office, Grand Sword Bearer. In 1805, he became Grand Junior Warden of the Antients and in 1806 Grand Senior Warden. It was at this point that he launched his masonic missionary campaign in South Wales. His business took him on a constant journey round the country, and required him to spend half the year visiting towns in Wales. The exact nature of Plummer's business is not clear; it is possible that he sold naval supplies of some kind.

Plummer found Welsh freemasonry in a sorry state. He afterwards wrote that when 'I commenced my exertions, there were but two lodges, one of them in Swansea, which was very thinly attended, and the other at Brecon in a dormant state'. During a period of eight years from about 1807, Plummer established eight new lodges in Wales and initiated more than two hundred masons. He planned his campaign like a military conquest. He selected Caerphilly as his starting point, then used a kind of swarming technique, with members of the Caerphilly

lodge establishing lodges in nearby towns, whose members in turn formed further lodges elsewhere. Members of the Caerphilly lodge set up new lodges in Cardiff, Newport and Merthyr. Members of the Newport lodge established lodges in Pontypool and Carmarthen. The Pontypool lodge helped set up a lodge in Abergavenny, and so on. This process was assisted by the masonic lodges of French prisoners of war billeted in towns like Abergavenny, with whom Plummer maintained close contacts. Plummer's energy in pursuing this strategy is evident in his breathless correspondence with Grand Lodge, dealing with dozens of detailed queries about the new lodges and issuing a stream of complicated instructions for forwarding his mail as he moved from place to place.

Plummer's attempts forcibly to implant freemasonry in Wales could create problems. A Modern lodge had been reestablished at Carmarthen in 1810, but disputes had arisen and Plummer saw a recruiting opportunity for the Antients, boasting to Grand Lodge that if an Antient lodge could be created in Carmarthen, thirty masons from the rival Grand Lodge would join it. An Antient lodge was duly consecrated by Plummer at Carmarthen, with masons from his Newport lodge as the senior officers. Returning to the lodge a few months later, Plummer found it in uproar because the Master had secretly taken the lodge warrant and equipment by boat to Tenby and illicitly created masons there. Plummer annulled these proceedings and claimed he had restored

harmony to the lodge, but the Master wrote to Grand Lodge complaining about Plummer's overbearing manner. He alleged that Plummer had insisted that the lodge pass a vote of thanks to him and, when this was passed by only a small majority, had gone from house to house with a petition supporting his actions, which he had bullied members of the lodge into signing. Plummer countered by sending to Grand Lodge documentary evidence of the Master's dubious proceedings at Tenby, including an account of his expenses there which included an expensive box at the theatre and ten pounds for 'dinner bill and girls'.

By 1814, Plummer had become weary. The union between the Grand Lodges seems to have disillusioned him, as he felt provincial officers were appointed who had insufficient involvement with local freemasonry. He lobbied unsuccessfully to become a provincial officer in Wales himself. Shortly before Plummer petitioned to become Provincial Grand Master of South Wales, the Indefatigable Lodge at Swansea had passed a resolution that 'Benjamin Hall of Abercarn in the county of Monmouth, MP for the county of Glamorgan...become a mason', and Hall was promptly appointed Provincial Grand Master. Plummer accepted this disappointment with fortitude, declaring that Hall 'is a man much respected, possessed of great talent, high property and great responsibility', but adding 'I hope it will be convenient with him to attend the duties of that office (if any are required).' Plummer went on to say that 'I cannot

attend the business of masonry in this country as heretofore but I trust that Grand Lodge considering my exertions are satisfied. I have done my duty in forwarding the welfare of masonry'. In May 1815, however, Plummer was back in Swansea and wrote one last letter to Grand Lodge: 'It is with unfeigned regret I have to inform you that the various country lodges I am in the habit of visiting three times in each year through the counties of Somerset, Wilts, Gloucester and Monmouth and South Wales are much disappointed since the Union of the two Grand Lodges, expecting a regular quarterly communication...; and at this time four quarters are past, without any information. The ancient lodges, in particular, finding themselves thus neglected, feel disposed to retract from the union, and remain independent of any Grand Lodge...'

This threatened western rebellion did not take place, unlike north west England where a number of lodges did shortly afterwards secede from United Grand Lodge. However, as soon as Plummer left the scene, the lodges he had established fizzled out. All Plummer's lodges except those at Cardiff and Merthyr had disappeared by 1830. Even those which survived experienced great difficulties. Merthyr was at this time the largest Welsh town, but between 1816 and 1827 the Loyal Cambrian lodge in Merthyr failed to recruit a single new member. The lodge rallied slightly in the 1830s, but again no new candidates were recruited between 1843 and 1849, and the possibility of closing the lodge was considered. In

1853, when the Provincial Grand lodge for eastern South Wales met at Merthyr, only thirty six people attended. The position in north Wales was even worse; between 1811 and 1852, no Provincial Grand Master for North Wales was appointed.

Most masonic scholars have ascribed the difficulties of early Welsh freemasonry to economic reasons, but this hardly explains the problems of the lodge in Merthyr, for example. Moreover, the difficulties of freemasonry contrast with the growth of the friendly societies, which became a significant feature of Welsh society. In the 1830s, while freemasonry was struggling, Swansea had 47 friendly societies and Merthyr 32. There were nearly 200 such societies in Glamorgan alone. While the freemasons in Merthyr could only muster six people to attend a Provincial Grand Lodge, the funeral of an Oddfellow in Merthyr attracted 170 brethren from four lodges, and on Christmas Day 1838 400 Merthyr Oddfellows processed in full regalia. Moreover, in contrast to England, the Welsh friendly societies attracted significant support from the upper middle classes. The Welsh preference for friendly societies seems to have been due largely to language. There were a number of indigenous Welsh-speaking friendly societies, most notably the Ivorites, and English friendly societies such as the Oddfellows allowed proceedings to be conducted in Welsh. By contrast, the freemasons remained a resolutely English-speaking body; at a time

when 91% of Merthyr's population was Welsh-speaking, it is not surprising they had difficulty recruiting there.

The greater flexibility of the friendly societies allowed them to become more closely allied to the emerging Welsh national institutions. Friendly society processions formed an important part of the Eisteddfod. The Oddfellows and Ivorites took a prominent part in the opening of the Carmarthen Eisteddfod in 1865. They were also one of the main attractions of the processions at Wrexham and Oswestry marking the coming of age of the Sir Watkin Williams Wynne IV in 1841. Another problem for the freemasons was their close alliance with the established church. The various Welsh clergymen who were freemasons before 1850 all seem to have been Anglicans. Given the overwhelmingly non-conformist character of Wales, this must also have weakened the position of the freemasons.

All this was about to change. In 1847, a parliamentary commission undertook an investigation of the state of education in Wales. The commissioners were three English lawyers who could not speak Welsh. Their report was ill-informed and prejudiced, portraying Wales as an ignorant backward country, inhabited by promiscuous and dirty people. The commissioners ascribed the backwardness of Wales to the Welsh language and the influence of non-conformity. The report caused an outcry in Wales, where it became known as the Treason of the Blue Books. The importance of the 1847 report as a

watershed should not be exaggerated, but it certainly galvanised the existing debate about language and education in Wales, and gave an enormous impetus to attempts to improve Welsh education. Welsh society became determined to prove its respectability through education. There were many views on the future of the Welsh language, but an influential body of opinion felt that English should be the language of trade and commerce and that Welsh should be used only for domestic purposes. The Cambridge academic Connop Thirlwall, the Bishop of St Davids, explicitly urged that the Welsh language should become merely a tourist attraction. The revived Society of Cymmrodorion organised an English-speaking social science section at the Eisteddfod to act as an instrument of modernisation.

Frederick Bolingbroke Ribbons studied at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge and became a schoolmaster at Birmingham, where he specialised in commercial education. From 1843 to 1857, he was Headmaster successively of Sir Thomas Powell's School and Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School at Carmarthen. Following his retirement in 1857, he returned to England, settling at Windsor. Ribbons was a minor, and faintly ridiculous, man of letters. He published a collection of poetry, the quality of which can be judged from the opening couplet of his lines to a Cambridge friend: 'Thank you Charlie for your letter, Never yet was penned a better.' He also produced some very banal works of religious instruction and pamphlets extolling the virtues of the Anglican

church. His pamphlets on education were more forward-looking, advocating the value of a commercial education and even suggesting the introduction of decimal coins and measures. Ribban's enthusiasm for commerce is also evident from his poetry, including his lines on the opening of the railway in Carmarthen in 1852, beginning 'Hail commerce! source of every social good', and praising the railway as 'a boon to Wales - a source of profit too - when her vast mineral wealth is brought to view'.

Ribbons' most notorious literary work was his memoir of the royal librarian, Bernard Bolingbroke Woodward, claimed as a relative on the strength of the coincidence of middle name. Ribbons' memoir comprises a number of inaccurate anecdotes and transcripts of letters to him by Woodward, including tactful comments on Ribbons' lamentable poetical efforts. The memoir was savaged by reviewers, who commented that the only reliable item in it was the photograph at the beginning, and questioned the propriety of reproducing so many personal letters. Woodward had published a history of Wales which cast doubt on many popular Welsh legends, which was so badly received in Wales that Woodward was apprehensive about visiting the country. Ribbons praised Woodward's work and gave examples of the backwardness and superstition of Wales, declaring that the only answer lay in education of the sort proposed by Bishop Thirlwall, the advocate of Welsh as a tourist attraction.

Ribbans, then, was an enthusiast for Anglicanism, commerce and the greater use of English by the Welsh. He was also a keen freemason, including a masonic song in his collection of poetry. In 1841, a lodge, known as St Peter's lodge, had been reestablished in Carmarthen; Ribbans became master in 1845 and helped set the young lodge on its feet. In 1855, St Peter's lodge sponsored the application to establish the Brecknock lodge at the Castle Hotel in Brecon, and Ribbans was the first master of the lodge. In 1856, he was instrumental in establishing the Prince of Wales lodge in Llanelli, and was again the first master of the lodge. Despite his teaching duties in Carmarthen, Ribbans attended all the meetings of the lodge in Carmarthen during his year as master, initiating fourteen new recruits. Ribbans' devoted service was marked by a special presentation in 1856. In 1857, he served as the Grand Senior Warden for the Province of South Wales Western Division.

Ribbans' work seems to epitomise a new phase in the history of Welsh freemasonry, where it is explicitly linked to a modernising movement, the distinctive features of which were commerce, education and the English language. It is at this point that freemasonry becomes a feature of Welsh life. The change can be seen by looking again at the membership figures of the Loyal Cambrian Lodge in Merthyr. From its low point in the early 1850s, the lodge rallied, establishing a new lodge at Aberdare in 1856, and attracting in the 1860s an average

of four recruits a year. This figure increases to an average of six a year in the 1870s, including, significantly, an unitarian minister. In the 1880s and 1890s, yearly recruitment is frequently in double figures, including such notable individuals as Lord Rhonnda, owner of Cambrian coalmines, MP for Merthyr and a significant figure in the Liberal establishment of late Victorian Wales. The annus mirabilis for the Loyal Cambrian was 1911, when twenty new candidates were initiated, comprising a cross-section of the Merthyr upper crust, including the Chief Clerk of the County Court, the Deputy Town Clerk, a police inspector, three solicitors, colliery engineers, a surgeon, an architect and musicians from the suburb of Cefn Coed. A similar resurgence is evident in North Wales. When Sir Watkin Williams Wynne IV became Provincial Grand Master of North Wales in 1852, only one North Welsh lodge was active. By the time he retired in 1885, the number of lodges had increased to 23 with seven hundred and forty members. By 1943, the number of lodges had increased to forty six; by 1977, there were ninety six lodges and a total north Welsh membership of more than 6000.

The link between the growth of freemasonry and the movement for improved educational and cultural provision in Wales is illustrated by an event in Haverfordwest. The Haverfordwest lodge had recruited sixty members in six years, and the need for a new meeting place was pressing. There had also been for some time complaints about the town's lack of a public

assembly room for concerts, lectures and other functions. The new masonic hall opened in 1872 incorporated a large hall with seating for 600 people which was made available for town use. Inhabitants of the town actively contributed to fundraising for the hall, principally through a grand masonic bazaar, held over three days in November 1869, which raised four hundred pounds. The night before the bazaar opened the local MP, Colonel Edwardes, was initiated into the lodge. Colonel Edwardes, afterwards Lord Kensington, later became Provincial Grand Master for the western division of South Wales, and an important figure in the late Victorian growth of Welsh freemasonry.

The story of Welsh freemasonry turned full circle in 1929, with the consecration of Gwynedd lodge, no. 5068, the founders of which were all members of the Honourable Society of the Cymmrodorion. The first master of the lodge was Sir Vincent Evans, the Secretary of the Cymmrodorion and a prominent figure in the national Eisteddfod. The close relationship of this lodge to the liberal Welsh establishment was reflected in the membership of Gwilym Lloyd George, the prime minister's son. It was hoped that the formation of this lodge would rekindle the older social functions of the Cymmrodorion, which had been squeezed out by its work as a learned and educational society. Thus, the society which had represented in the eighteenth century a London Welsh response to freemasonry itself became linked with freemasonry. At the consecration of the

Gwynedd lodge, it was pointed out that, although there were lodges in London operating in French, German and Italian, no Welsh version of the ritual was available. The Gwynedd lodge produced a book of Welsh masonic songs and a lecture on the second tracing board in Welsh, but progress in giving Welsh the same status as other languages was slow. In 1979, permission was given for the use of a Welsh address to the Worshipful Master in installation ceremonies, and, finally, in 1982 Dewi Saint lodge, no. 9067, was formed, which was the first lodge given permission to perform the ritual in Welsh.

This lecture has been an extended reflection on a passing remark of Raphael Samuels, who, seeking to illustrate the dangers of Anglocentrism in history, pointed out that, in investigating the origins of freemasonry, one might start by comparing it with the eisteddfod. Unfortunately, Raphael's remark misfired, in that, as David Stevenson has magnificently shown, the best place to start examining the origins of freemasonry is in fact north of the border, where the earliest lodge records survive. Nevertheless, I make no apologies for concentrating, in my consideration of the problem of Britain this evening, on Wales. There has recently been a fashion for producing works which claim to offer British history looking at the whole of Britain, but which in fact largely concentrate on England, with token examples from Wales and Scotland. I would contend that truly British

history can only emerge from detailed studies of aspects of the history of Britain's component national groupings. Laurence Brockliss and David Eastwood have suggested that it is a mistake to think in terms of the creation of an integrated concept of British nationality, and that the British state which gradually emerged in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was formed of multiple allegiances. Even this is perhaps too rigid, and the concept of Britishness should perhaps be conceived as more fluid and dynamic, changing shape constantly from the earliest to the most recent times. It is perhaps a mistake to see freemasonry as playing one single role in this process. Its function also changes and it can assume multiple identities. It would be wrong to see the role of freemasonry in Welsh history as exclusively associated with Anglicising modernisation from 1850. As a body with a highly organised provincial structure, freemasonry could offer even the most remote areas access to metropolitan facilities and thus help build a sense of national identity.

In 1769, the son of one of the members of the lodge at Anglesey went mad. Grand Lodge's committee of charity in London agreed to pay the expenses of admitting the unhappy man to Bethlem Hospital in London and the Senior Grand Warden, one of the governors of the hospital, made the arrangements for his admission. The Grand Secretary himself went to the hospital to fill up the necessary forms, and obtained advice from a friend on the medical staff as to how the various practicalities

should be handled. Later that month, the 'poor lunatic', accompanied by his doctor, unexpectedly arrived by coach in London late one evening. The Grand Secretary, James Heseltine, was away, and no one would allow the poor man any shelter, even in their stables. Eventually, the landlord of a tavern close to Heseltine's office allowed him to stay there, provided he was chained to a table and the doctor slept in the same room on chairs. There was a delay in completing the admission to Bethlem and the doctor who had accompanied the man to London refused to stay with him any longer, so Heseltine, who had now returned, arranged for the patient to be sent to a madhouse just outside London. Heseltine, who was 'left with the man upon my own hands and answerable for everything', also sorted out the eventual transfer to Bethlem and gave the necessary security required by the hospital should he ever escape. He then sent a detailed account of his proceedings back to Anglesey. Sadly, about a year later, the unfortunate man died, and Heseltine again intervened to ensure that he had a decent funeral. Acts of charity and kindness such as Heseltine's can contribute to the shaping of a nation. By providing a means by which provincial members could get access to metropolitan facilities such as hospitals, freemasonry could help bring Wales closer to London and played a part in developing those everyday contacts which are the sinews of the nation.

**'The Voice Conventional': Druidic Myths and
Freemasonry**

*Paper given at the Kirkcaldy Masonic Research
Conference, May 2001, and at the Fourth International
Conference of the Canonbury Masonic Research
Centre, November 2002*

The nomination of Dr Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Wales, as the next Archbishop of Canterbury has caused controversy in some quarters, particularly because of his views on gay clergy. Last August, Dr Williams was involved in a more unlikely controversy, when, in recognition of his contribution to Welsh culture and literature, he was initiated into the *Gorsedd Beirdd Ynys Prydain*, the Assembly of the Bards of the Island of Britain, a body of distinguished Welshmen which since the nineteenth century has organised the ceremonial associated with the *eisteddfod*. The ritual of the *Gorsedd* purports to be Druidical, and evangelical groups in both England and America complained that Archbishop Williams was participating in pagan ceremonies, a view which caused offence in Wales, where the intimately-linked *gorsedd* and national *eisteddfod* are the chief institutional expressions of Welsh-speaking culture. The fact that the Queen (whose bardic name is Elisabeth o Windsor) and the Duke of Edinburgh (or Philip

Meirionydd) are also members of the *gorsedd*, was hardly mentioned.

The *gorsedd* is a separate body from the *eisteddfod*, and they have distinct histories. *Gorsedd* is a word which is difficult to translate. It originally meant a mound or barrow, and so by extension was used for a throne, and thus came to be applied to formal judicial gatherings. The *eisteddfod*, whose name derives from the Welsh word for sitting, is a musical and literary competition whose origins can be traced back to at least 1176. The *gorsedd* did not become linked to the *eisteddfod* until 1819. The *gorsedd* elaborated the ceremonial aspect of the *eisteddfod*, and helped turn the informal local *eisteddfodau* of the eighteenth century into the imposing spectacle which is the modern Royal National Eisteddfod. The *gorsedd* comprises three orders, which are, in ascending order of seniority, *ofyddion* (ovates), who wear green robes; *beirdd* (bards), whose costume is sky blue; and *derwyddon* (druids), the most distinguished order, into which Archbishop Williams was initiated, who wear robes of pure white. The head of the *gorsedd* is the Archdruid, who is elected for a term of three years. National and provincial *eisteddfodau* are summoned by the Recorder, an official of the *gorsedd*, who, a year and a day beforehand, reads a proclamation, headed by the motto, 'The Truth Against the World', which invites all people to attend the *eisteddfod*, to be held 'in the face of the sun and the eye of the light', 'where no naked weapon shall appear against them'.

Each day of the *eisteddfod* commences with a meeting of the *gorsedd*, which is held in a circle of twelve stone pillars, specially set up for the occasion. A large flat-topped stone, known as the Logan stone, is placed in the centre of the circle. Facing it, and marking the east, is the Stone of the Covenant, at which the Herald Bard stands, and behind this are the Portal stones which are guarded by purple-robed Marshals. The right hand portal stone points to sunrise on midsummer day, while the left-hand stone is aligned with the rising sun at midwinter. The shadows thrown by these stones form the pattern /\\, symbolising the name of God. The Archdruid with his court and retinue enter the sacred circle, and the meeting of the *gorsedd* is proclaimed by four great trumpet calls, one to each point of the compass.

The meetings of the *gorsedd* contain a number of ritual components which are repeated by the *gorsedd* in such major ceremonies of the *eisteddfod* as the *coroni*, the crowning of the poet who submits the best volume of poetry, and the *cadeirio*, the enthronement of the poet who submits a long poem in a strict metrical form. These elements are:

- A proclamation of peace. The Archdruid, standing on the logan stone, cries 'A oes heddwch' (Is there peace?), to which the assembly replies, 'Heddwch' (peace). The herald holds a great sword, which is taken in and out of its sheath three times to signify peace.

- The reading of the *gorsedd* prayer.
- A roll call of bards, both living and dead.
- The presentation of the *corn hirlas* or horn of plenty (literally 'the long blue') by a young married woman, dressed in scarlet robes, representing the local community.
- The presentation by a young girl, also dressed in scarlet robes, of a 'basket of flowers from the land and soil of Wales'.
- The performance of the *dawns y blodau*, a floral dance, based on a pattern of gathering flowers from the field.

The banner and other regalia of the *gorsedd* further elaborate the Druid symbolism. The various symbols on the banner of the *gorsedd* include golden garlands of oak and mistletoe, the mystical sign of the three rays, the slogan 'Truth Against the World', the Welsh dragon, a crystal ring symbolising the sacred circle of the *gorsedd* and the word 'Heddwch' (peace), surrounded by oak leaves, a leek, a daffodil and mistletoe. Similar imagery recurs in the banners displayed in the *eisteddfod* pavilion.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, it was widely believed that the *gorsedd* was of enormous antiquity. The eleventh edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*

declared that the *gorsedd* was 'as old at least as the time of Prydain the son of Ædd the Great, who lived many centuries before the Christian era', and thus by implication created by the Druids. In 1907, the eminent astronomer and director of the Solar Physics Association, Sir Norman Lockyer, gave a lecture in Swansea on the *gorsedd*. Lockyer was among the first scientists to suggest that Stonehenge and the Pyramids had astronomical functions. But, for Lockyer, the *gorsedd* put both Stonehenge and ancient Egypt in the shade. He declared that 'in my opinion your *gorsedd* in Wales is a thing forty centuries old. That is a long period of time. It makes the *gorsedd* I take it just about the oldest thing that we have on the planet connected with any human activity past or present'. Lockyer reached his conclusions by examining the alignment of the stone circles used by the *gorsedd*. He urged that further inquiries should be instituted in Wales, and declared that there were many points at which Welsh tradition would be of the utmost value to science.

This research has indeed been undertaken, but, far from confirming the antiquity of the *gorsedd*, it has established that the *gorsedd* is a modern creation. In particular, the Welsh scholar Griffith John Williams has demonstrated how the ceremonies of the *gorsedd* were invented in the late eighteenth century by Edward Williams, a stonemason who, under his bardic name of Iolo Morganwg or Ned of Glamorgan, was one of the most accomplished but eccentric Welsh poets and scholars.

Iolo was born in 1746 in the hamlet of Pennon in Llan Carfon in Glamorganshire. His father was a stonemason. Iolo was too sickly to attend school, and from the age of nine worked desultorily at his father's trade, while at the same time making up for his lack of schooling by constant private study. Iolo's parents spoke English at home, and he learnt Welsh from an enthusiastic scholar of Welsh poetry who lived nearby. After his mother's death, Iolo left Wales and worked as a mason in different parts of England, finally pitching up in London, where he cut an exotic figure in the London Welsh community and, as a self-taught genius, attracted a great deal of attention in the literary world.

Iolo described himself in a letter to the *Gentleman's Magazine* as follows:

Edward Williams is now about forty years of age and lives by the occupation of a journeyman mason. He is remarkably sober and temperate, very seldom drinks any strong liquor, and, if he sometimes tastes them, it is in very small quantities, and was never seen in liquor. His food is almost entirely vegetables; and he is a professed Pythagorean in respect of animal food. He has other singularities; none of them, however, to my knowledge, of a vicious cast. Though not in the least given to wastefulness or extravagance, he is but a poor economist; and when was a poet known to be otherwise!...Edward Williams lives the life of a hermit...He is never seen walking without a book in his hand. In his religious

opinions he seems inclined to Quakerism, though he professes himself of the Established Church. He has acquired considerable reputation in his trade.

Iolo's quaker sympathies afterwards turned to unitarianism, and he was the leading light in the establishment of the Unitarian Association of South Wales in 1802. Robert Southey described Iolo in his poem *Madoc*, where he refers to him as 'Iolo, Old Iolo, he who knows/The virtues of all herbs of mount or vale/Whatever lore of science or of song/Sages and bards of old have handed down'. Iolo was active in promoting the myth of the twelfth-century Welsh Prince Madoc who was supposed to have discovered America, and among the various exotic schemes in which Iolo was involved was an expedition to contact the Welsh-speaking Indians thought to have survived in the Missouri valley. In 1794, he published his *Poems, Lyrical and Pastoral*. Subscribers to the volume include Hannah More and Thomas Paine. The following year, Iolo presented an ode to the Prince of Wales on the occasion of the Prince's marriage, and insisted on appearing before the Prince in a mason's leather apron and carrying a trowel.

In 1797, Iolo returned to Wales, setting up a shop selling books, tea and other commodities in the small town of Cowbridge. A fierce opponent of slavery, Iolo's shop window advertised 'East India Sugar, Uncontaminated by Human Gore'. Iolo, like many other London Welsh, was

a fervent supporter of the French Revolution in its early stages, calling himself 'The Bard of Liberty'. Iolo also displayed in his shop window a book with a cover marked 'The Rights of Man'. Government officers, believing that Iolo was selling Tom Paine's proscribed book, seized the volume, only to find it was a copy of the Bible. Iolo quickly found the constraints of running a shop irksome, and moved to Flemingstone in the Vale of Glamorgan, from which he restlessly explored the South Welsh countryside on foot. Buoyed up by endless cups of tea and his imagination fired by the laudanum which he took for his asthma, Iolo sat up late night after night, documenting the bardic system which his extraordinary mind had conjured up. Iolo's biographer, Elijah Waring, recalled the chaos of Iolo's study: 'to find a desired paper, it was necessary to make a long voyage of discovery amongst a crowded archipelago of documents scattered about his tables, shelves, and floor'.

The title of this talk, 'The Voice Conventional' is taken from a poem by Iolo, 'The Voice Conventional of the Bards of Britain', which purports to describe the structure of the order of bards in pre-Christian Britain. In Iolo's system, 'The Voice Conventional' was one of three ancient methods of bardic memorisation. Iolo claimed to have transcribed many lost texts from ancient manuscripts in Welsh castles which recorded bardic and druidical laws. Before Iolo's time, work on recording and documenting ancient Welsh literature in the eighteenth century had focussed on North Welsh literature. Iolo

argued that the South Welsh traditions were more ancient and purer. 'The North Wales bards', he wrote, 'have nothing at all of the ancient and genuine bardism'. Iolo claimed that the descendants of the ancient bards in South Wales by the end of the eighteenth century numbered only a handful of people, the most learned of whom was a John Bradford of Bettws. Iolo alleged that he had been invested by Bradford into the Chair of Glamorgan of the Primitive Order of Bards of the Isle of Britain.

Iolo's claim to be the last representative of an ancient South Welsh bardic tradition provided the occasion for the emergence of the *gorsedd*, which made its first public appearance in 1792, at, of all places, Primrose Hill. On this occasion, ceremonies similar to those now performed at the *eisteddfod* were performed by expatriate Welsh poets led by Iolo. A notice in *Gentleman's Magazine* declared that the purpose of the ceremony was 'to give the English reader an idea of what, though very common in Wales, has never been properly known in England. The Bardic Institution of the Ancient Britains, which is the same as the Druidic, has been from the earliest times, through all ages, to the present day, retained by the Welsh, and is now exactly the same as it was two thousand years ago'. Throughout the rest of his wanderings, Iolo continued to promote and elaborate the *gorsedd*, carrying small stone pebbles in his pocket to form the sacred circle, and constantly promoting his

motto, which he claimed for the druids, '*Gwir yn erbyn y byd*', 'Truth against the World'.

So where did Iolo get the idea for the *gorsedd* and particularly its ritual? Throughout Iolo's lifetime, there were constant suggestions that he was a freemason, and that the *gorsedd* was a form of freemasonry. Iolo hotly denied he was a freemason. Nevertheless, the idea that the *gorsedd* is in some way related to freemasonry has never really gone away, and has recently been taken up again by scholars. If the *gorsedd* was indeed derived from freemasonry, then this would emerge as one of the most important examples of the social and cultural impact of freemasonry. In linking the *gorsedd* to the *eisteddfod*, Iolo performed an extraordinary act of social engineering. He created an institution which would enable Welsh language and literature to be preserved as a living force strengthening and invigorating the Welsh sense of nationhood. At a time when English is emerging as the international *lingua franca* and small languages disappear daily, it is a remarkable fact that, within a few hours of London, there is still a vibrant Welsh-speaking culture. Iolo's *gorsedd*, by elaborating the *eisteddfod* into the chief focus of Welsh nationhood, played a fundamental role in preserving a Welsh-speaking culture. If freemasonry played a role in creating this national institution, then the *gorsedd* would provide us with a prime example of what freemasonry has achieved 'beyond the craft'.

In recent literature, the suggestion that Iolo was a freemason was first made by Phillip Jenkins in an article in the *Welsh History Review*, in which he argued that freemasonry provided an important vehicle for the maintenance of Welsh Jacobite aspirations, and saw Iolo as linked to this tradition. However, the only evidence cited by Jenkins for Iolo's masonic status is the coincidence that he was a stonemason. Nevertheless, the statement that Iolo was a freemason was taken up by Gwyn Alfred Williams in his book on the Prince Madoc myth and elsewhere. Williams twice claimed that Iolo had said that the secret books of the freemasons had preserved the Druidic traditions, but does not give a specific reference to any of Iolo's writings for this statement. Williams also declared that 'Freemasonry and Unitarianism ran as underground currents through this first phase of the Welsh revival' and that 'Many of the leading figures of the Welsh revival were freemasons'. One reference by an American merchant writing to Iolo's associate, John Evans, while Evans was engaged in the search for Welsh Indians suggests that Evans may possibly have been a freemason, but this is a flimsy basis on which to build such a substantial claim, and by no means provides evidence that Iolo himself was a mason. It seems that it was supposed connections such as these which prompted the historian Raphael Samuel to comment that, in investigating the history of freemasonry, the best starting point might be the *eisteddfod*.

There are a number of further coincidences which might be used by an optimist or enthusiast to suggest a connection between the *gorsedd* and freemasonry. The link between the *gorsedd* and *eisteddfod* began in 1819, when the *gorsedd* ceremony was performed by Iolo in the garden of Ivy Bush hotel in Camarthen, which had been the cradle of Welsh freemasonry. The first royal *eisteddfod* was at Denbigh in 1828, when the *eisteddfod* was honoured by a visit from, of all people, the Duke of Sussex. *Eisteddfodau* were held by the London Welsh at Freemasons' Hall in the 1820s, one of which was held under the patronage of the Prince of Wales. A uniform used by the *gorsedd* at the Liverpool *eisteddfod* in 1884 appears to have been based on masonic regalia. However, there is no reason to think that all these are anything more than coincidences, reflecting the way in which the historical paths of two very similar institutions will cross from time to time. There is no reliable evidence that Iolo was a freemason. Indeed, if anything, Iolo's strong sense of solidarity with his fellow working masons may have meant that he was hostile towards freemasons. His insistence on attending the Prince of Wales wearing a working apron and bearing a trowel sounds very much like a working mason seeking to score a point against a Grand Master. Moreover, there is little in the *gorsedd* ceremonies which can be linked to masonic precedent - the strongest parallels are perhaps in the treatment of God as a generalised supreme being, but this probably mainly reflects Iolo's unitarian beliefs.

A good starting point in investigating the background to Iolo's thought is his 1794 publication, *Poems Lyric and Personal*, which bore on its title page the motto claimed by Iolo for the Druids: 'Truth against the World'. Iolo provided extensive commentaries and notes on the poems in this volume. Three major themes emerge from these. First, Iolo stresses the primacy of oral tradition as a guardian of truth. He wrote: 'The bards and druids (both one and the same people) of ancient Britain had, before letters were known, reduced the arts of memory and oral tradition into a well systematised science...This well guarded tradition was a better guardian of truth than letters have ever been...Macpherson, Chatterton, Pinkerton, and others could never have sported with the bardic tradition as they have done with letters.' The irony here, of course, is that Iolo was appealing to a bardic tradition to create a hoax which was far more long-lived than anything achieved by Macpherson or Chatterton. Second, Iolo emphasises Wales as the only true guardian of this Druidic tradition - this was particularly audacious since Druids were at that time important national symbols in many other places besides Wales. Iolo declared that 'the druidic theology also still remains in Wales, where it was never entirely abolished; yet druidism has been sought for everywhere but in Wales and the Welsh Language, where it is only to be found'. A third theme to emerge from Iolo's commentaries is his contempt for those scholars who, in searching for the Druids, ignored Wales. Iolo complains that 'Our modern, in other respects, very learned antiquaries, whenever they

dabble in British or Celtic etymologies, run into the wildest absurdities. Why is it so? There are Welshmen, well skilled in their native language that would, without any high interest, afford those gentlemen any information in their power, and be highly gratified in being so called upon.' Iolo was particularly contemptuous of English literary depictions of Druids, describing Gray's famous poem *The Bard* as 'truly ridiculous'.

By the time Iolo was writing, there was a substantial corpus of English, Irish and French writing on the Druids, who since the sixteenth century, because of the paucity of hard historical information about them, had proved useful as a vehicle for the development of national historical myths. Seventeenth-century English writers, for example, portrayed the Druids as the root of an indigenous religious tradition which ultimately produced the English Reformation. Similarly in France and Germany, the Druids were a significant component in developing mythological views of a pre-Roman national past. This process of using the Druids as ciphers in national and religious disputes continued in the eighteenth century. The Irish freethinker John Toland used the Druids as a vehicle to satirise the established church and particularly the Irish priesthood. William Stukeley, an antiquarian who carried out pioneering fieldwork at Avebury and Stonehenge, was incensed by Toland's work, and sought at length to show how the religion of the Druids embodied the original wisdom of the patriarchs. As a result, Stukeley's druids sound almost

like Church of England clergymen, who had simply had the misfortune to be born before the arrival of the Messiah. In Scotland, James Macpherson, in both the Ossian forgeries and elsewhere, portrayed the Druids as the people who had taught the Celtic highlanders their qualities of tolerance, lack of malice and valiance, while also giving them an understanding of natural philosophy. The pervasiveness of the Druidic image by the middle of the eighteenth century is evident from the way in which James Wheeler's 1747 manual on the cultivation of oaks was entitled *The Modern Druid*.

It seems that it was William Stukeley who first suggested a link between freemasonry and the druids. As is well known, Stukeley became a freemason in the hope that it might assist him in his investigations into the Druids. Sometime later, John Cleland in 1766, using one of those false etymologies which so exasperated Iolo, proposed that the word freemason was derived from the same root as a maypole, and thus of Druidic origin. Similarly, the wayward drunken Anglesey poet Goronwy Owen joined a lodge at Walton in Liverpool in the belief that freemasonry 'was a branch of my old ancestors, the Druids of yore'. However, these occasional suggestions that freemasonry may have had Druidic roots are less important than the role of freemasonry in helping to shape the popular image of the Druids. An important area which requires further research is the extent to which books such as Anderson's *Constitutions* or William Preston's *Illustrations of Masonry* helped shape

knowledge in provincial England of such subjects as the orders of architecture or early history. The earliest editions of Anderson's *Constitutions* accepted Inigo Jones' theory that Stonehenge was a Roman monument, and do not refer to the Druids at all. The 1756 edition of the *Book of Constitutions*, however, while still accepting Jones's theory on Stonehenge, includes a short description of the Druids, claiming that they had 'many of the uses of masons amongst them'. William Preston also began his history of masonry with a substantial description of the Druids, and a strong hint that perhaps there were parallels between the Druids and freemasonry. Since so many lodges possessed copies of the *Book of Constitutions* and Preston, they must have been among the most widely-read books in late eighteenth-century England, and certainly helped shape popular ideas of the Druids.

The recurrent suggestions of a connection between the Druids and the freemasons, given a kind of official backing by these hints in both the *Book of Constitutions* and Preston, made it inevitable that, at some point, somebody should come up with the idea that there should be a purified form of freemasonry with the 'hidden' Druidic components restored. And it seems that this is what happened in 1781 when the Ancient Order of Druids was founded at the Kings Arms Tavern in Poland Street in London. The founder was, according to the traditions of the order, a man named Hurle. It has been suggested that he was Henry Hurle, a builder and

surveyor of Garlick Hill, but this cannot be substantiated. The traditions of the order state that Hurle and the other founders were freemasons under the Ancient Grand lodge who had taken a particular interest in the history of the Druids. The order self-consciously saw itself as a revival of the Druids and it was declared that, in establishing a grand lodge, the aim was to preserve information about the druidic community and promote the practice of those fraternal precepts which had distinguished the Druids. No example of the ritual first used by the Order survives. A number of the non-masonic orders using ritual lost their original ritual as a result of legislation in 1799 and, when the ritual was reinstated, borrowed heavily from masonic components. It is unclear whether this happened with the Ancient Order of Druids. However, in the earliest surviving rituals for the order, the masonic dimension is clear: lines from masonic ritual alternate with specious druidic references. Someone has, very clumsily, tried to reinstate the Druidic component of freemasonry. The kind of mixture of druid and masonic symbolism which characterised the order is evident from the following description of a Druid apron supplied by the Grand Secretary of the Order in 1932: 'The All-Seeing Eye represents God or the Great Archdruid of the Universal ... the 'pavement' is made up of triangles and the archway will probably represent one of the trilithons as seen at Stonehenge; the scales represent justice; the Sun was looked upon by the Druids as the source of light and life', and so on.

The Ancient Order of Druids became very popular. It seems that Past Grand Arch Hurle was particularly active in promoting the order, opening three lodges in Bristol and Bath in 1789 and 1790. From the West Country, the Druids spread to Wales, becoming particularly popular in the 1820s and 1830s. The Ancient Order emphasised that it was not a mutual benefit society; as one correspondent pointed out in 1865, 'we have no benefit principle in its usual acception in our constitution, but exactly resemble the freemasons in this respect'. However, unlike the freemasons, the Ancient Order enjoyed no protection under the law and was, strictly speaking, an unlawful society. Consequently, different Druid groups constantly split away to form friendly societies which would enjoy some legal protection, leading to the formation of the United Ancient Order of Druids, the Sheffield Equalized Druids and so on, through an increasingly fissorous process. Interestingly, some of these groups seem to preserve a confused tradition of a descent from freemasonry, referring to a proclamation by John Toland on Primrose Hill for all Druids to meet on 22 September 1717 at the Apple Tree Tavern (which magnificently mixes up everything).

Writers on the history of the *gorsedd* such as Dillwyn Miles have suggested that Iolo was influenced not by the Ancient Order but by other Druidic organisations. However, they seem to have been misled by the various legendary histories claimed by some Druid groups. It seems that the Ancient Order of Druids was the first in

the field of Druid revivalism, and were almost certainly an influence on Iolo. Iolo of course drew on many other sources, and in particular his deep reading of old Welsh sources, but insofar as there was a masonic influence on him, it probably came indirectly, via the AOD. Then a curious thing happened. The Ancient Order of Druids and its various offshoots, such as the United Ancient Order, themselves began to be changed by Iolo's fabrications. There is not time here to look at this process in any great detail, but it is encapsulated by a book published in 1836 by the Revd D. James, curate of Almondbury in Yorkshire, called *The Patriarchal Religion of Britain or a Complete Manual of Ancient British Druidism*, dedicated to the Ancient Order of Druids in the West Riding of York. James explains that the AOD was devoted to preserving information about the ancient Druids, and to cultivating the social and moral virtues which distinguished the original Druids. James had no doubt as to the best place to look for information about druids: Wales. And he also had no doubt as to the Welsh scholar who was best informed about the Druids: Iolo Morganwg. James's manual of druidism is in many respects a small primer of Iolo's ideas.

Iolo's ideas even infiltrated the ritual used by the AOD and its offshoots, so that the net result was an extraordinary mixture of crass eighteenth-century Druid images, Iolo Morgannwg and masonic ritual. Thus, in the ceremony used in 1848 for the opening of gorsedds by

the Independent Order of Druids, which had been established in Bolton in 1829, the ceremony is conducted by the Grand Arch, who proclaims Iolo's slogan, 'The Truth against the World', then turns to the inside Tyler, and reminds him that the first part of a Druid's duty is to see that his gorsedd is secure from intrusion. Similarly, the lecture used by the United Ancient Order of Druids for the inauguration of Past Arches in 1906 was a pot-pourri of Iolo's ideas on Druidism, emphasising the bardic science of oral tradition and again using Iolo's motto, 'The Truth against the World'. This traffic was not, however, entirely one way. From an early date, members of friendly societies joined the processions of the *gorsedd* at the *eisteddfod*. At first, members of the *gorsedd* were distinguished only by ribbons worn on the arm. Consequently, the members of the friendly societies, and particularly the members of the Druid organisations, looked more imposing than the *gorsedd*. This prompted the members of the *gorsedd* to start wearing special vestments. Likewise, the title Archdruid seems to have been a late borrowing from the Ancient Order of Druids.

One of Iolo's favourite images was that of building castles in the air, and the *gorsedd* was a huge but enormously influential 'castle in the air'. In conclusion, what lessons do the gorsedd and its cross-relationship with the masonically-inspired Druid friendly societies offer, as we consider freemasonry 'beyond the craft'? The first is that in looking to investigate freemasonry outside

craft freemasonry, we should not restrict our scope to those bodies which have received some kind of recognition from official freemasonry. The Ancient Order of Druids has had no official contact with freemasonry virtually since its inception, but it nevertheless represents a major offshoot of freemasonry. The process whereby particular orders somehow remained part of the masonic world was a complex one, and the range of bodies inspired by freemasonry is wider than those currently familiar to freemasons. For example, when the temperance organisation the Good Templars was established, there was considerable discussion as to whether it was a spurious masonic sect, and it does indeed seem to have drawn some inspiration from the masonic templar orders. Second, the phrase 'beyond the craft', so frequently applied to bodies like these, is perhaps misleading. It suggests that the aim of these degrees and orders to create something over and above freemasonry. In the case of the druid orders, however, the aim was clearly to try and embody what was, in the view of the founders, the essence and origin of freemasonry, not to go beyond it.

But the most important lesson of the story of the *gorsedd* and the Druid orders is that it shows the complexity and richness of the process whereby tradition is invented. Iolo's 'castle in the air' has been one of the central examples by which historians have become aware of the process by which the supposedly ancient myths and traditions so dear to many nations were invented in the

eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Many examples of this process, ranging from the *gorsedd* to coronation rituals, are gathered together in an influential book edited by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger called *The Invention of Tradition*. Hobsbawm's introduction to this book includes the following quotation, which I would like to offer as a kind of epigram for our discussions this weekend:

'History is the raw material for nationalist or ethnic or fundamentalist ideologies, as poppies are the raw material for heroin addiction. The past is an essential element, perhaps the essential element in these ideologies. If there is no suitable past, it can always be invented. Indeed, in the nature of things there is usually no entirely suitable past, because the phenomenon these ideologies claim to justify is not ancient or eternal but historically novel'.

Freemasonry in Greater London : a case study

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Last March, Professor Roy Porter, one of the most prolific British historians, spent an afternoon working on his allotment in Sussex. Cycling home, carrying daffodils he had gathered at the allotment, he collapsed and died. He was 55 years old. Porter wrote more than 100 books, a number of which are useful in understanding the intellectual and social context of the history of freemasonry. For example, one of his last books, *The English Enlightenment*, vividly portrays the cultural and ideological forces which shaped English freemasonry in the eighteenth century. Porter was, like me, a South Londoner, and one of his most personal publications was his 1994 study, *London: A Social History*. In describing how London became the first great world city, Porter stresses how a 'basic fault-line' running through the city's history has been a failure to provide adequate local government. In Porter's words, 'Not since the Romans has London possessed a unified government, a government relevant to all its needs. Administration has been fragmented, often deliberately'.

The anomalies of London's government are particularly apparent during the period of its greatest expansion in the

nineteenth century. Because of concern about the cost of introducing authorities sufficiently large to cover the whole metropolis, the city corporation was the only great municipal corporation to remain unreformed in the 1830s. The huge new suburbs which sprang up around London during Victoria's reign were governed in the same way as the smallest country village, by the parish vestry. Individual vestries were obliged to obtain local acts of parliament to enable them to deal with the problems of urbanisation, while a host of special commissions, separate from the vestries, were established to deal with such matters as paving, police and sewers. In 1855, it was calculated that local government in Greater London was carried out by more than 300 different bodies deriving their authority from over 150 local acts.

The Metropolitan Board of Works, established in 1855, was the first municipal agency to be given powers covering the whole of London's built-up area, and its creation enabled large-scale infrastructure projects such as the Thames Embankment and the main drainage system to be carried out. However, the bulk of local government continued to be the responsibility of the vestries, although some of the quirks in the constitution of these bodies had been removed by the legislation which created the Metropolitan Board. In 1888, the Metropolitan Board of Works was replaced by an elected body, the London County Council. At first the powers of the L.C.C. were not much greater than those of its

predecessor, but gradually it also acquired responsibility for such matters as education, transport and social security. In many ways, the achievements of the L.C.C. were impressive, but in 1900 the civic powers of the vestries had been transferred to metropolitan borough councils, and the relationship between the L.C.C. and the boroughs was complex and fractious. Moreover, the continuing growth of the capital meant that the boundaries of the administrative county of London became obsolete almost as soon as they were established. The rise and fall of the Greater London Council and the establishment of a second mayor of London are just the latest instalments in a story as old as London itself.

The administrative anomalies created by London's growth are not restricted to civic government. Cricket followers will be familiar with the way in which county cricket still uses the pre-1888 boundaries, with Middlesex covering north London and Surrey the south. The church struggled to come to terms with the growth of south London.¹⁵⁴ Much of the area which became south London was under the jurisdiction of the vast and distant diocese of Winchester. In 1877, this area was transferred to the diocese of Rochester. The bishop of Rochester, Anthony Thorold, realising, in the words of Florence Higham, 'that this transfer was no answer to the

problem of South London, an area of unrelieved poverty and ignorance',¹⁵⁵ was determined that this area should have its own religious identity. A suffragan Bishop of Southwark was appointed in 1891 and an ancient parish church in Southwark was restored to become a pro-cathedral in 1897. Finally, in 1905 the diocese of Southwark was created. Despite this long gestation, the structure and shape of the new diocese was far from logical, and it was at the time of its birth little more than an unwieldy conglomeration of parishes stretching from the industrial riverside to the prosperous Surrey countryside.

The organisation of freemasonry in the London area reflects similar difficulties. The pivotal event in modern freemasonry was, of course, the creation of a Grand Lodge by four London lodges in 1717, and London remains at the heart of English freemasonry. There are today approximately 50,000 London masons, about a fifth of the total membership of English freemasonry.¹⁵⁶ Nevertheless, the organisation of London freemasonry has for many years been seen as a problem. In 1992, Lord Eglinton, the Assistant Grand Master, echoing comments made by the then Grand Secretary two years previously, declared that 'London is not a province and,

¹⁵⁴ Florence Higham, *Sixty Years On: The Story of Southwark Cathedral and Diocese 1905-1965* (London: Diocese of Southwark, 1965), pp. 5-8.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁵⁶ London Grand Rank Association Bulletin No. 109 (August 1990), address by Commander Higham as Grand Secretary on London freemasonry.

masonically speaking, a geographical accident: many meet there because it is equally inconvenient for all'.¹⁵⁷ The arguments presented at that time against major changes in London freemasonry echo those which have frequently prevailed in discussions of London's local government: the existing system is cheap and economical in manpower; to treat London in the same way as the provinces would be too expensive and cumbersome.¹⁵⁸

The most commonly used working definition of built-up London in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were the Bills of Mortality. This was a short-hand term for those 109 parishes for which weekly digests of the number of deaths were prepared. The Bills of Mortality were an early warning system for outbreaks of plague, so to be effective they had to include suburban areas outside the city proper, such as the Surrey parishes of Lambeth, Bermondsey and Rotherhithe. Increasingly, the term Bills of Mortality was used in legislation to define the metropolitan area. In 1724, when the Premier Grand Lodge declared that brothers could only belong to one lodge in the Bills of Mortality, it was simply using the most common means of easily defining the built-up area

¹⁵⁷ 'London Freemasonry: Today and Tomorrow', London Grand Rank Association Bulletin No. 115 (February 1992)

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.* Lord Eglinton summarises the reasons against 'provincialising' London by stating that London freemasonry was economic on manpower and not expensive. He suggested that 40 Assistant Provincial Grand Masters would be required to achieve parity of representation between London lodges and the provinces.

of London. The Bills of Mortality were again used in Premier Grand Lodge as a definition of metropolitan London in 1767-8 when a proposal was put forward for the appointment of General Inspectors or Provincial Grand Masters for the London lodges, but this proposal was defeated through the opposition of the London lodges.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Bills of Mortality had become outmoded, and they were superseded in 1836 when the Registrar-General's Department was established. However, in 1815, two years after the Union, freemasonry had already introduced its own definition of greater London. London lodges were defined as those lying within a ten-mile radius of Freemasons' Hall.¹⁵⁹ This was an extraordinarily wide-ranging definition of London, embracing places like Richmond, Barnet and Eltham at a time when they were still very rural. The adoption of the ten-mile radius appears very forward-thinking, in that it seems to assume urban expansion and make allowance for it. However, it seems likely that the ten-mile rule was adopted for more pragmatic reasons. London lodges paid higher fees to Grand Lodge than those in the provinces, and Grand Lodge was doubtless anxious to maximise its revenue. Grand Lodge may also have sought to avoid conflicts of precedence by ensuring that provincial

¹⁵⁹ *Constitutions of the Antient Fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons, Part the Second* (London: W. P. Norris, 1815), pp. 70-1.

officers did not have authority too close to London. The common practices of organising lodge outings and of moving metropolitan lodges to country villages outside the city during the summer may also have been factors in determining the ten-mile definition.¹⁶⁰

¹⁶⁰ For example, between 1737 and 1798 the Premier Grand Lodge held annual summer feasts in such places as Hampstead, Putney, Turnham Green, Hackney, Deptford, Vauxhall, Islington and Canonbury, with a special lodge, the Country Stewards Lodge No. 540, being established to organise this event: W. Wonnacott, 'The Country Stewards' Lodge and the Green Apron', *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum* 36 (1923), pp. 150-178; J. M. Hamill, 'The Country Feasts and their Stewards - A Further Note', *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum* 89 (1976), pp. 222-226. Despite the demise of the Country Stewards' Lodge and its feasts, summer outings remained a feature of the calendar of many London lodges. For example, from 1863 to 1901, the Lodge of Antiquity No. 2 held every June a Recreation banquet which, until 1893, took place in hotels either in Richmond or Greenwich: W. H. Rylands and C. W. Firebrace, *Records of the Lodge Original, No. 1. Now the Lodge of Antiquity No. 2...* (London: Harrison and Sons, 1926), 2, pp. 180-181. The *Freemasons' Quarterly Review* for September 1842, 9 (1842), p. 303, notes that 'Lodges of Recreation and Water Frolics have been the order of the day. For the last three months London Masonics have patronised Richmond, Blackwall, Greenwich, Canonbury, and other classic spots'. The ten mile radius enabled London lodges to hold such events without intruding on any provincial authority. The spread of London and the establishment of the Province of Middlesex in 1870 led to a growth in 'summer lodges', lodges established specifically to provide a country venue for freemasonry in the summer, and to lodges from the Greater London area seeking permission to meet during the summer in venues in rural Surrey and Middlesex: Allan Beaver, *Middlesex Matters: A History of 125*

Prescient though the ten-mile radius might appear, it offered little assistance apart from geographical flexibility in helping freemasonry cope with the growth of London. There was no provincial or district grand master for the London lodges, and the disciplinary powers of a provincial grand master were exercised within the ten-mile boundary by the Board of General Purposes.¹⁶¹ The administration was run from the Grand Secretary's office. Consequently, as London grew and the number of London lodges increased, the demands on the administrative machine at Great Queen Street threatened to overwhelm both the board of General Purposes and Grand Lodge itself. The ten mile radius also created difficulties for the organisation of freemasonry in the counties surrounding London. In 1850, the Provincial Grand Master for Surrey pointed out that St George's Lodge in Chertsey suffered in the award of provincial honours, because so many members lived outside the province. He suggested that this should be remedied by annexing southern Middlesex to his

Years of Middlesex Freemasonry 1870-1995 (Addlestone: Provincial Grand Lodge of Middlesex, 1995), pp. 22, 29-30, 260-1, 274, 277, 278, 288. In May 1914, the Bolingbroke Lodge No. 2417, which then met in Battersea, requested a dispensation to hold a meeting at the Sun Hotel, Kingston-upon-Thames, which was in the Province of Surrey, 'to avoid the hot atmosphere of a town meeting place': Returns, Library and Museum of Freemasonry.

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province.¹⁶² The ten-mile radius undoubtedly contributed to the fact that a province of Middlesex was not established until 1870.¹⁶³ Even then, the new Provincial Grand Master had great difficulty in finding potential provincial officers who were resident in the county.¹⁶⁴ At a provincial meeting in 1908, it was lamented that the province was impossible to organise: 'Dispersed as it is, with the London district of freemasonry in the centre, there is no room for expansion at all...'¹⁶⁵

Between 1851 and 1911, the population within the ten mile radius increased from more than two and a half million to over seven million. The consequent increase in the number of London lodges and freemasons created great problems.¹⁶⁶ Freemasons' Hall was unable to

¹⁶² Letter from Alexander Dobie, 24 September 1850, on the subject file for the Provincial Grand Lodge of Surrey at the Library and Museum of Freemasonry.

¹⁶³ But cf. Beaver, *op. cit.*, p. 22, who suggests that the largely rural character of Middlesex was also a major factor.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

¹⁶⁶ The *Freemasons' Calendar* for 1851 lists 126 London lodges; by 1913 there were 731 London lodges: *The Freemason* 31 January 1914, pp. 506-7. The increase could perhaps have been larger; an inspection of the file of refused petitions at the Library and Museum of Freemasonry shows that Lord Zetland as Grand Master regularly declined applications for new London lodges on the grounds that there were enough already. For example, the file of rejected petitions includes petitions for various lodges to meet in Battersea which were rejected on these grounds, including an 1862 petition for the 'Royal Albert Lodge', which was met in the Swan Tavern, and an 1863

accommodate all those entitled to attend Grand Lodge, and provincial brethren frequently travelled to London for quarterly communications, only to be turned away because the hall was already full of members from London. There were complaints that London masons used Grand Lodge to pursue local disputes. Moreover, the pressure of London business meant that the Board of General Purposes was being overwhelmed. London masons themselves were disgruntled because they felt that the lack of an honours system for London lodges made it difficult for them to achieve Grand rank.¹⁶⁷ In the winter of 1904-5, an attempt was made gently to refer in Grand Lodge to the need for an administrative structure for London freemasonry similar to that enjoyed by the provinces and districts. This was unsuccessful in generating discussion of the issue, and Alfred Robbins, a young Past Master of the Gallery Lodge No. 1928, decided to raise openly in Grand Lodge the question of creating a subordinate Grand Lodge for London. Attempts by him to put a motion on this issue at Grand Lodge were ruled out of order. In the meantime, a

petition for the 'Royal Alexandra Lodge', which was to meet in the Swan Hotel, Bridge Road.

¹⁶⁷ These issues were summarised in the 1913 report on the organisation of Grand Lodge. They had also previously been ventilated from time to time in the correspondence columns of *The Freemason*, e.g. 50 (1910-11), pp. 28 January 1911, p. 486; 4 February 1911, p. 502; 11 February 1911, pp. 519-521, which includes a useful list of London lodges arranged according to the ten division scheme eventually proposed in February 1913.

distinguished group of London masons formed a provisional committee to investigate the best form of administration for London freemasonry. This committee took a poll of London lodges, held a public meeting of London masons, and organised a petition calling for a London Grand Lodge. To head off this discontent, the Duke of Connaught as Grand Master announced at the Quarterly Communication in December 1907 the creation of London Rank, the first time that London was recognised masonically as an entity.¹⁶⁸ While this was effective in temporarily heading off the discontent of London masons, London rank at first proved controversial. Some provinces refused precedence to holders of London rank, and it was said of the honour that 'Some prize it; others deride it'.¹⁶⁹

Most of the opposition in 1907 to the creation of a subordinate Grand Lodge for London seems to have come from the Pro Grand Master, Lord Amherst, who resigned shortly afterwards (his retirement being perhaps hastened by the controversy about London). Amherst was succeeded by Lord Ampthill, who was still at the time of his appointment under forty years of age.

¹⁶⁸ On the introduction of London Rank, see further W. Read, 'Sir Alfred Robbins, 'Prime Minister of Freemasonry'', *AQC* 86 (1973), pp. 101-3 and F. W. Golby, *London Rank* (1930), bound in volume 21 of the series of masonic pamphlets at the Library and Museum of Freemasonry.

¹⁶⁹ *The Freemason* 3 January 1914, p. 425. The term 'London Grand Rank' did not come into use until 7 June 1939.

Ampthill felt that the organisation of Grand Lodge needed a thorough overhaul in order that it would deal with business more expeditiously. In 1910 Amherst circulated Provincial and District Grand Masters with proposals for reform of Grand Lodge, and a special committee of the Board of General Purposes was established to consider the matter. Robbins was a member of this committee, and Robbins's appointment as President of the Board of General Purposes in 1913 seems to reflect the high regard in which he was held by Lord Ampthill. Ampthill and Robbins made a formidable partnership, and they were determined to place the organisation of Grand Lodge on a new footing.¹⁷⁰

In December 1913, the report of the committee of the Board of General Purposes on the future government of the Craft was presented to Grand Lodge. Robbins played the chief part in drafting the report and presenting it to Grand Lodge.¹⁷¹ The report recommended the

¹⁷⁰ Read, *op. cit.*, pp. 103-6.

¹⁷¹ Read, *op. cit.*, pp. 103-8. The report was summarised in *The Freemason* 6 December 1913, pp. 360-3. The following is based on the discussion of this report in Read and in *The Freemason*, 13 December 1913, p. 385, 390; 3 January 1914, pp. 425-429; 10 January 1914, pp. 444-449; 17 January 1914, pp. 461-466; 24 January 1914, pp. 481-486; 31 January 1914, pp. 497-501, 506-507 (a useful map of the masonic area of London); 7 February 1914, pp. 517-521; 14 February 1914, pp. 537-539; 21 February 1914, pp. 553-554; 28 February 1914, p. 574.; 7 March 1914, pp. 585-588; 21 March 1914, p. 623; 30 May 1914, p. 779; 20 June 1914, pp. 829-832.

establishment of a Grand Council, consisting of a mixture of Grand officers, elected members and members nominated by the Grand Master, to 'exercise all the administrative, legislative and judicial duties at present exercised by Grand Lodge'. The main logistical problem in establishing the Grand Council was of course London. Since London did not have a provincial structure, it was difficult to organise elections there. The possibility of using electoral colleges was considered, but it seemed that such a device would increase factionalism, instead of reducing it. Organising the London lodges geographically was impossible, since two thirds of the London lodges met at or within a mile of Freemasons' Hall. The report therefore proposed the creation of ten Metropolitan Grand Lodges. Each Metropolitan Grand Lodge would be designated by a roman numeral, and lodges would be assigned to that Metropolitan Grand Lodge whose number corresponded to the last digit of the lodge number. The initial proposal envisaged that the Metropolitan Grand Lodges would cover the whole ten mile area, but in ensuing discussion the provinces surrounding London suggested that the metropolitan district should correspond to the administrative county of London.

Robbins' presentation of the report to Grand Lodge was masterly. He did not deliver a diatribe in favour of reform, but simply left the report to speak for itself, drawing the attention of Grand Lodge to the most salient facts. He emphasised that all Lodges would have an

opportunity to put forward their views on the changes. Grand Lodge approved the report in principle, but stipulated that Lodges should be allowed three months in which to put forward their views. The report triggered an enormous debate within Freemasonry. Robbins himself was at one point accused of misleading lodges by suggesting that Grand Lodge had already approved the proposals, whereas it had in fact only approved the principle. When the consultation was complete, it was found that of 3160 papers sent out, 2696 were returned (an 85% poll), and that the voting by lodges and by individuals was respectively 57% and 60% in favour of the changes.¹⁷² However, London had again complicated matters. While the Provinces and Districts had supported the proposals, the London lodges had mainly voted against them.¹⁷³ This made the proposed reform unviable, since the creation of the General Council depended on the establishment of the Metropolitan Grand Lodges.

Robbins hoped that the scheme could somehow be rescued, and a committee of Grand Lodge was appointed to take the matter forward by arranging a series of conferences with London lodges in their proposed divisions. However, as Robbins himself afterwards wrote, 'By this time, it was June 1914; and, before a

¹⁷² Read, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

¹⁷³ The Middlesex Masters Lodge voted against the reform of Grand Lodge but nevertheless asked that the ten-mile radius should be abolished and the Metropolitan Grand Lodges established: Beaver, *op. cit.*, p. 21

single conference could be arranged, the Great War had broken out. In accordance with the general feeling that that was not a time in which to engage in a large plan of constitutional change, ... the task was set aside by common consent.¹⁷⁴ No attempt was made to return to the reform of Grand Lodge after the war, although Robbins, still apparently smarting from his experiences in 1913, bravely declared in 1930 that 'all who closely watch the work of Grand Lodge know that the subject, though dormant, is far from dead'.¹⁷⁵ The immediate problem of accommodation for Grand Lodge was resolved by the rebuilding of Freemasons' Hall between 1927 and 1933. Some provincial freemasons had in 1913 fiercely criticised the fact that Quarterly Communications were always held in London, and in 1922 it was agreed that the September Quarterly Communication could be held outside London, and meetings were held at Liverpool in 1923 and Birmingham in 1928.¹⁷⁶ Although the organisation of London freemasonry has been discussed many times since the end of the First World War, changes have so far only been piecemeal. In 1979, the ten mile radius was reduced to five miles, and lodges in the 'border area' were allowed to choose between joining the relevant

province or remaining a London lodge.¹⁷⁷ Although a small office in Freemasons' Hall had responsibility for London lodges, it is only recently that a London management group has been established for the London lodges.¹⁷⁸ This month sees the conclusion of consultations on a working party report recommending the creation of a Metropolitan Grand Lodge, more than two hundred years after such a measure was first proposed.

The administrative vicissitudes of London freemasonry have created anomalies in lodge histories which can be confusing to both the mason and the outsider. This can be illustrated by looking at two lodges in south London. Putney, the starting point of the boat race, was until the nineteenth century a small Surrey riverside village. In 1899, some members of the Putney Constitutional Club who were not masons thought it would be a good idea to have a masonic lodge attached to the club, and put a notice on the club notice board to this effect. Masonic members of the club pointed out that this was an improper procedure, but nevertheless Putney Lodge No. 2766 was eventually consecrated. The founders of the lodge were local tradesmen and professional men, including the clerk of the vestry from the neighbouring parish of Fulham, the local vicar, and the editor of the local paper. The strong local connections of the lodge

¹⁷⁴ Sir Alfred Robbins, *English-Speaking Freemasonry* (London: Ernest Benn, 1930), p. 154.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 154.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 181.

¹⁷⁷ Quarterly Communication?

¹⁷⁸ QC

were reflected in its badge, showing the tower of Putney church, and in some of its lodge furniture, made of wood from the old Putney bridge. At first, the lodge met in the Putney vestry offices. Afterwards, it met for many years on the premises of the Constitutional Club. New owners objected to the lodge meeting on these premises, and it was forced in 1976 to move across the river to Fulham. This proved too expensive, and the lodge then moved to a masonic centre at Twickenham. As a result, however, it also became a Middlesex lodge, so that anyone seeking information about this lodge associated with a place which was in Surrey needs to check Middlesex sources.¹⁷⁹

Clapham is another part of south London which was in Surrey. The Clapham Park Lodge No. 5446 was formed in 1934 by members of the Clapham Rotary Club, and met originally in the centre of Clapham, but over the years moved from one venue to another, ending up eventually in the London Masonic Centre in Clerkenwell in central London. As a result, by 1992, the south London connections of the lodge had largely vanished. Nine members also belonged to lodges which were in the Province of Middlesex and five others lived in the province. It seemed logical for this south London lodge to become a Middlesex lodge, so it moved to Twickenham and joined the Province of Middlesex.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁹ Beaver, *op. cit.*, pp. 292-3 ; *Putney Lodge Jubilee*

¹⁸⁰ Beaver, *op. cit.*, p. 320.

Other lodges from south-west London, as we shall see, have moved in other directions. Many have gravitated towards the central London facilities of Freemasons' Hall, Mark Masons Hall and, most recently, the London Masonic Centre in Clerkenwell,¹⁸¹ again losing much of their local identity in the process. Stories such as these may reinforce perceptions of greater London, and particularly south London, as an anonymous and rootless area. At the end of the nineteenth century, Sir Walter Besant famously described south London as 'a city without a municipality, without a centre, without a civic history'.¹⁸² He declared that the residents of south London 'have no local patriotism or enthusiasm – one cannot imagine a man proud of New Cross'. In 1961, Professor Jim Dyos published a groundbreaking study of the development of Camberwell in south-east London which offered important corrections to Besant's bleak view.¹⁸³ For Besant, the development of south London was a sudden process; he wrote that 'The houses sprang up as if in a single night; streets in a month, churches and chapels in a quarter'.¹⁸⁴ Dyos showed that the process of development was more piecemeal, the character and shape of the different developments reflecting the

¹⁸¹ The London Masonic Centre was opened in the former Middlesex Sessions House in June 1980: Wells, *op.cit.*, pp. 142-3.

¹⁸² Walter Besant, *South London* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1899), p. 320.

¹⁸³ H. J. Dyos, *Victorian Suburb: A Study in the Growth of Camberwell* (Leicester, 1961).

¹⁸⁴ Besant, *op. cit.*, p. 318.

underlying pattern of rural landholding. This development was not simply the result of the appearance of the railways; changes in road transport and improvements in coaches, buses and trams were also important factors. Moreover, Dyos emphasised that the new inhabitants of Camberwell were not all, as Besant imagined, commuters. Many were employed locally in retailing and small-scale manufacturing. While Besant saw south London as bereft of social and cultural facilities, Dyos showed how the last stages of development included the provision of halls and public facilities, usually in association with churches or local government.

Among these facilities, Dyos notes, was a masonic hall.¹⁸⁵ This was the Surrey Masonic Hall.¹⁸⁶ A Surrey Masonic Hall Company had been established in November 1872 in order to provide a suitable building for masonic activities in the new urban districts of South London. *The Freemason* enthusiastically supported the endeavours of the company, reporting the issue of its prospectus and carrying a description of the proposed building.¹⁸⁷ In July 1873, Bro. John Thomas was

appointed as Architect,¹⁸⁸ but unfortunately he died shortly afterwards, and Bro. Edward Clark, a Past Grand Superintendent of Works was appointed in his place.¹⁸⁹ The builder was Bro. John Oliver of Denmark Hill.¹⁹⁰ The foundation stone was laid with masonic honours in May 1874. The building was dedicated in July 1875, and *The Freemason* carried an imposing lithograph of the building.¹⁹¹ The venture was a commercial disaster. The Masonic Hall Company went bankrupt just two years later, and the building was acquired at auction by Oliver.¹⁹² Matters were made worse when damage was caused by floods.¹⁹³ Nevertheless, despite all these problems, the Surrey Masonic Hall provided facilities for the kind of cultural activities which, Besant claimed, were thin on the ground in south London. For example, in 1877, the Surrey Association for the Advancement of Science, Art and Literature held a grand concert there.¹⁹⁴ In 1880, the hall was eventually acquired by the South London Choral Association, whose leading lights were

¹⁸⁵ Dyos, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

¹⁸⁶ Bailey and Cryer, *op. cit.*, pp. 88 (illustration), 169-70, who state that the history of this building has been lost. It can easily be reconstructed from *The Freemason*. Bailey and Cryer state that the site of the hall was purchased in 1931 by a motor company and redeveloped.

¹⁸⁷ *The Freemason* 6 July 1872, p. 468; 30 November 1872, p. 345;

¹⁸⁸ *The Freemason* 19 July 1873, p. 473.

¹⁸⁹ *The Freemason* 4 October 1873, pp. 643-4.

¹⁹⁰ *The Freemason* 1874, pp. 341-2.

¹⁹¹ *The Freemason* 17 July 1875, pp. 310-11; the lithograph is facing pp. 80 in this volume. It is reproduced in Barker and Cryer, *op. cit.*,

¹⁹² *The Freemason* 28 July 1877, p. 313; 4 August 1877, p. 324; 23 September 1877, p. 394. Oliver attempted to establish a Surrey Masonic Club there: *The Freemason* 17 November 1877, p. 493.

¹⁹³ *The Freemason* 31 August 1878, p. 428.

¹⁹⁴ Ebenezer Lock, *History of the South London Choral Association* (London: The Surrey Masonic Hall, 1892), p. 19. A copy of this book is in the British Library, pressmark 7896.de.42.

Leonard and George Venables, two music teachers and advocates of tonic sol-fa, who were also keen masons.¹⁹⁵ The funds from the masonic lettings enabled them to develop the Surrey Masonic Hall into a significant cultural centre. A large concert hall was added to the building, regular concerts, lectures and music classes were held there, and a library and reading room was created.¹⁹⁶ The Surrey Masonic Hall shows how freemasonry could be significant in developing the civic life of the new conurbation of south London. I would like to explore this theme a little more by looking briefly at the early history of some lodges in Battersea in south-west London.

Until the middle of the nineteenth century, Battersea was a small riverside village whose main occupation was market gardening. In 1838, the London and South Western Railway was opened, whose terminus was at Nine Elms in the east of the parish. During the next thirty years, the area was criss-crossed by new railways, and large railway workshops were opened. The huge station at Clapham Junction emerged as the heart of the new urban area. The population grew from 6,887 in 1841 to 150,558 by 1891. To the north of the railway, bordering the river, was an area characterised by manufacturing industry and mostly working class housing, some very poor quality. Around Clapham Junction station and to the

south of the railway, major retailing centres developed from the 1870s, together with middle class housing, particularly around the two green lungs of Clapham and Wandsworth Commons. Battersea was best known at the beginning of the last century for its radical politics. Its MP was John Burns, the first working man to serve in a cabinet. Battersea Borough Council pioneered municipal socialism, creating one of the first direct labour schemes, opening state-of-the-art baths, wash-houses and libraries, and providing high-quality council housing. The Council refused for many years to fly the Union Jack from the town hall, and courted national controversy with its support of the anti-vivisection movement. This radical tradition continued well into the twentieth century; in 1913 its mayor was the Black Pan-Africanist John Archer and from 1922-9 Battersea was represented in parliament by the Indian communist Saklatvala.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁷ For overviews of Battersea's history, see Patrick Loobey, ed., *Battersea Past* (London: Historical Publications, 2002); Reginald J. Prescott, 'Village Under the Smoke: The Story of Battersea and its People', *The Battersea Booklist Quarterly*, 2nd ser., nos. 11-14; Roger Logan, *South Battersea: The Formative Years 1851-1900* (Wandsworth: Wandsworth Historical Society, 1977); Priscilla Metcalf, *The Park Town Estate and the Battersea Tangle: a Peculiar Piece of Victorian London Property Development and its Background* (London: London Topographical Society, 1978); Chris Wrigley, *Changes in the Battersea Labour Movement 1914-1919* (Loughborough: Loughborough University, 1978); Janet Roebuck, *Urban Development in 19th-Century London: Lambeth, Battersea and Wandsworth* (Chichester: Phillimore, 1979); Sandra Wallman, ed., *Living in South London: Perspectives on Battersea 1871-1981*

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 15, 29, 31.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 23-31.

The earliest Battersea masons belonged to a Moderns lodge which met at the King's Arms in nearby Wandsworth.¹⁹⁸ This lodge was established as early as 1723, but the earliest information about its membership dates from 1794. Wandsworth was at this time a small river port at the confluence of the River Wandle with the Thames. The membership of the lodge reflected the industries then established in Wandsworth, and included a miller, a calico printer and two coal merchants. The lodge also contained members from places further up the Wandle, such as Beddington and Merton, reflecting links between the industries along the small river. While some members of the lodge were well-to-do, there was a large

(London: Gower, 1982), pp. 17-82; Coral Lansbury, *The Old Brown Dog: Women, Workers and Vivisection in Edwardian England* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), pp. 3-25; Ben Rudder, *Builders of the Borough: A Century of Achievement by Battersea and Wandsworth Trades Union Council from 1894 to 1994* (Battersea: Battersea and Wandsworth Trades Union Council, 1994); Sean Creighton, 'Battersea and the New Unionism', *South London Record* 4 (1989), pp. 31-46; Sean Creighton, 'Organised Cycling and Politics: the 1890s and 1900s in Battersea', available on-line at <http://www2.umist.ac.uk/sport/Creighton.html>. Sean Creighton has also published in photocopied form a number of very useful articles, including 'The Ancient Order of Foresters in Battersea and neighbouring districts', 'John Archer: Battersea's black progressive and labour activist' and 'From Exclusion to Political Control: Radical and Working Class Organisation in Battersea 1830s-1908', available from Agenda Services, 18 Ridge Road, Mitcham, CR4 2ET. [Ruddock; Jo Stanley, Battersea Town Hall]

¹⁹⁸ Bailey and Cryer, *op. cit.*, p. 115. Information about membership is taken from returns at the Library and Museum of Freemasonry.

artisan element. In 1794, most of the members were still from Wandsworth, but as the years went by men from Battersea increasingly joined the lodge. Many of these Battersea recruits were lower class, including a bricklayer, a coachman and a number of market gardeners. The large artisan membership of the lodge would have made it vulnerable to the economic downturn after 1814, and indeed it disappears from sight after 1813, being finally erased some years later.

Battersea is best known in masonic history as the home from 1853 to 1934 of the Royal Masonic Institution for Girls. The opening in 1853 was marked by a public procession of Grand Lodge and a huge garden party in the grounds, attended by between three and four thousand visitors. However, it seems that the presence of the R.M.I.G. did not help spread freemasonry in the locality. The first lodge to be firmly based in Battersea was the Earl Spencer lodge no. 1420, named after the local Lord of the Manor and consecrated in 1872. The history of this lodge encapsulates many major themes of the development of freemasonry in this area. First, the founders came mostly from New Wandsworth, reflecting how freemasonry was associated with the growth of the politically conservative middle class areas of south Battersea.¹⁹⁹ Second, the greater professionalisation of

¹⁹⁹ The founders who signed the petition for this lodge were: Edward Spooner, gentleman, of 2 Spencer Road, New Wandsworth; William Christopher Todd, gentleman, of New Wandsworth; Charles

local government led to a new class of salaried officials who were to play a significant role in the local growth of freemasonry. The first master of the Earl Spencer lodge was Edward Spooner, who was an officer of the Westminster Vestry, and the other founders included engineers and surveyors connected with local vestries. Some of the founders of the Earl Spencer lodge were involved in the development of other societies and associations in the area. Spooner, for example, was an officer of the New Wandsworth Philanthropic Society.²⁰⁰

Although Earl Spencer lodge was created to provide a masonic meeting place for the inhabitants of south Battersea, it suffered constant problems with its accommodation. It met at a succession of taverns and hotels in the district, eventually moving north to the Albert Palace, an ambitious attempt to create a new Crystal Palace adjacent to Battersea Park. The Albert Palace went bankrupt in 1887, and the lodge sought permission to move to Cannon Street in the centre of London. These moves caused constant anxiety to the

Jackson, gentleman, of Clyde Villa, Southfields; Thomas Buckham, civil engineer, of Spencer Road, New Wandsworth; James Neal, contractor, of Spencer Road, New Wandsworth; Arthur Southam, surveyor, of Clapham; and Joseph Hiscox, gentleman, of Lavender Hill; cf. John Monk, *The History of the Earl Spencer Lodge No. 1420 1873-1973* (n.p.p., n.d.).

²⁰⁰ Spooner used stationery of the Westminster Vestry and the Philanthropic Society in his correspondence about the establishment of the new masonic lodge.

secretariat in Great Queen Street. A memorandum on the lodge by an Assistant Grand Secretary at the time of the collapse of the Albert Palace suggests complete bewilderment: 'Is New Wandsworth in Battersea?', he wrote, 'Is the Swan Hotel in New Wandsworth?'. A final despairing note suggests that, for this official at least, south London was a foreign country: 'Dodd tells me there really is no decent place for a lodge in Battersea, he lives at Lavender Hill and therefore knows something of the neighbourhood'.²⁰¹

Despite these difficulties, the lodge had at this time 52 members, mostly from south Battersea.²⁰² While the membership comprised a mixture of tradesmen and professional classes, particularly notable was the involvement of men connected with the vestry, such as Peter Haythornthwaite, who served as Secretary and Master of the lodge, was a member of both the Vestry and the Borough Council, and was the conservative Mayor of Battersea in 1909-10. Also striking is the contribution to the lodge of the new class of local government employees, including for example, a librarian, the steward of the local dispensary, a workhouse master, and a vestry clerk.

²⁰¹ These peregrinations are recorded in the returns of the lodge in the Library and Museum of Freemasonry; cf. Monk, *op. cit.*

²⁰² For details of lodge membership, see the returns in the Library and Museum of Freemasonry.

When the Albert Palace finally closed, the lodge was forced briefly to move to Putney, but, following the opening in Lavender Hill of a new restaurant, Stanley's, the lodge was able to return to Battersea. The owner and manager of the restaurant became members of the lodge, and Stanley's became a major centre of freemasonry in Battersea for many years. In 1908, a refurbishment of the restaurant prompted the Earl Spencer lodge to move to the Criterion Restaurant in the Strand. Immediately, the character of the lodge changed. The number of Battersea initiates declined, and new members of the lodge began to be drawn from further afield. This process became more marked after the First World War. Of 22 initiates between 1918 and 1925, only three were from Battersea; increasingly members lived in such new suburbs as Hanwell, South Ealing and Lee. The lodge now meets in Freemasons' Hall. When the lodge celebrated its centenary in 1972, no members lived in Battersea and its members had forgotten why their lodge bore its eminently local name.²⁰³

A similar process of divorce from the locality took place even more rapidly in a lodge consecrated shortly after the Earl Spencer lodge, Mount Edgcumbe lodge no. 1446. This was based in north Battersea, and the founders included owners of riverside wharves and factories, as

²⁰³ The lodge wrote to Freemasons' Hall asking for an explanation of the name: Lodge file, Library and Museum of Freemasonry.

well as a local doctor.²⁰⁴ A letter accompanying the petition again emphasised the need for a local masonic venue. It described how a lodge had previously met in Chelsea, but had moved to the city. This necessitated members travelling more than five miles to attend each lodge meeting, and many had resigned their membership of the craft for this reason alone. The letter claimed that they would take up freemasonry again if they could meet in the immediate vicinity. The warrant was granted on condition that the lodge met in Battersea. Within eight years, however, the inn where the lodge met was demolished and the lodge asked for permission to move, claiming that it was impossible to find a suitable meeting place in Battersea and that it was unable to recruit members in the locality. Eventually, permission was given for the lodge to move to the Bridge House Hotel at London Bridge.²⁰⁵ It quickly lost its Battersea connection

²⁰⁴ The founders who signed the petition for the lodge in 1873 were: William Ough of the Wellington Lime and Ancient Wharf, Lambeth; A C Burrell, tailor, of Piccadilly; John Coates of Oak Wharf, Battersea; Robert William Whiteley, wine merchant, of Devonshire Place, New Wandsworth; Frederick Pemberton of Worcester College, Falcon Road; William Kempston, M.D., of Oak House, Battersea; T. White of Home Road, Battersea; and Daniel Parlabeau of Harroway Works, Battersea.

²⁰⁵ *The Freemason*, 3 (1870), p. 95, carried the following advertisement: 'Bridge-House Hotel, London Bridge. This hotel has facilities for Masonic Meetings, arbitrations, public dinners, balls, &c., and is allowed to be in real domestic comfort one of the best in the metropolis, possessing the advantage of a moderate scale of charges, which, with excellent cuisine, Wines of the first quality, and

altogether. Its members began to be drawn chiefly from south-east London, with a large proportion connected with the building trade.²⁰⁶

The lack of masonic lodges in Battersea became a matter of concern to some inhabitants, and Dr Philip Davis, a food scientist and journalist, who claimed to be 'the leading journalistic confectionary-trade expert in the world', launched a campaign for a local lodge, and in 1891 he wrote forcefully to the Grand Secretary as follows: 'Ten years ago the population of this district was 107,262 persons and at that time (if I am accurately informed) two, if not more, craft lodges met within its limits; this year's census shows that the population has increased to 150,458 – nearly equal to that of Newcastle-on-Tyne – and today not one lodge meets within its confines. They have all removed on the plea that there is no suitable accommodation for them; have gone beyond the local radius; are scarcely recognised any longer as local lodges, and freemasonry is at a much lower ebb in this vicinity than it should otherwise be under any circumstances'. Davis stressed that the lack of a lodge meant that there were many lapsed masons in the area, and felt confident that a new lodge would quickly recruit a hundred members. He outlined ambitious plans to build

the care and attention shown to guests, justifies the preference accorded to it. Tariffs on application to Joseph H. Spencer'.

²⁰⁶ This change can be traced in the lodge's returns in the Library and Museum of Freemasonry.

a large masonic hall opposite Clapham Junction station, and asked for his petition to be quickly granted to enable him to purchase the land for the hall.²⁰⁷

Thus was established Bolingbroke lodge no. 2417, but difficulties about shared use of the premises meant that the proposed masonic hall was never established, and Bolingbroke lodge was again dogged by the familiar accommodation problems. Nevertheless, the lodge rapidly grew to more than 50 members, drawn mainly from the area around Clapham Junction.²⁰⁸ With the opening of a new town hall in 1894, the lodge moved

²⁰⁷ Letter accompanying the petition for the lodge in the Library and Museum of Freemasonry.

²⁰⁸ Davis quickly fell out with the brethren of the Bolingbroke lodge. By 1894, he was petitioning enthusiastically for the establishment of a lodge based in the City to be called the Chinook Lodge. In August 1894, a mason called Combeil wrote to the Grand Secretary forwarding a notice of Davis's bankruptcy and stating that "This man - I learn - was bankrupt in Manchester some years ago. I wish we had some means of getting rid of such blots on masonry..." He also sent a list of Davis's creditors who included the firm of Jones and Aylett in Battersea who were owed seven hundred pounds. Charles Munslow wrote as expressing the concern of Bolingbroke lodge concern about Davis's petition: 'It is very difficult indeed to convey in a letter and I am even not sure that I am not committing a very great masonic sin in doing so, but really the facts are such that before allowing Bro Davis to put forward an application for a warrant to another lodge you ought to know the facts of the case..'. The petition for the Kohinoor lodge was refused, and on 15 February 1895, Davis was excluded from freemasonry: Refused Petitions, Library and Museum of Freemasonry.

there, taking the precaution of initiating the caretaker first.²⁰⁹ The use of the town hall encouraged employees of the vestry and borough council to join: in 1903, the Council's Superintendent of Works was initiated.²¹⁰ The lodge had strong connections with local conservative groups – Charles Munslow who was lodge secretary was for example secretary of the Clapham Conservative Association²¹¹ – and the socialist Borough Council made increasing difficulties about the lodge's use of the town hall.²¹² In 1904, the lodge moved to Stanley's Restaurant. It continued to be the principal focus of freemasonry in the locality until after the First World War, organising for example a masonic service of commemoration at the Town Hall in 1919, which was attended by the mayor and other local dignitaries.²¹³ Although the lodge was

²⁰⁹ A letter of 28 February 1894 in the lodge returns in the Library and Museum of Freemasonry requested permission to initiate John Pigott, the messenger-caretaker of Battersea Town Hall, as a serving brother who would supply the lodge with refreshments. The letter pointed out that initiation of Pigott would be advantageous for Bolingbroke lodge and any other lodge which would meet in the town hall.

²¹⁰ Hubert Mark Green.

²¹¹ Munslow used notepaper of the Conservative Association when writing to Freemasons' Hall.

²¹² The returns of the lodge contain repeated requests for dispensations to meet elsewhere because the council had refused permission for the lodge to use the town hall.

²¹³ A dispensation was necessary to wear masonic clothing during the service, and a copy of the announcement for the service was included in the letter requesting dispensation, preserved among the

still meeting at Clapham Junction in the 1960s, its local links had been substantially weakened as a result of the expansion of membership in the 1920s. In 1924-5, 22 new members were initiated, but only two of these were from Battersea, while eight were from north London. It now meets at Freemasons' Hall in central London.

One of the most imaginative attempts to promote masonry in Battersea was associated with the building of the Shaftesbury Park Estate in the 1870s, an estate of model cottages designed for clerks and respectable members of the working class built by the Artisans Labourers and General Dwellings Company Limited, which also built similar estates in Queen's Park, Forest Gate and elsewhere.²¹⁴ The foundation stone, laid by Lord Shaftesbury, declared 'Healthy Homes the First Condition of Social Progress'. This pioneering

lodge's returns at the Library and Museum of Freemasonry: 'A masonic service has been organised by the Bolingbroke Masonic Association, assisted by members of all lodges of instruction and regular lodges of the South West District ... to piously celebrate victory and peace after the Great War, thus affording an opportunity to express the truly masonic teachings of which our Order is founded. Freemasons residing within an easy radius of the Town Hall will assist by their presence at this festival of thanksgiving'.

²¹⁴ Loobey, *op. cit.*, p. 128; Creighton, 'Battersea and the New Unionism', *loc. cit.*, p. 34; Metcalf, *op. cit.*, pp. 35, 44, 46; *Artizans Centenary 1867-1967* (London: The Artizans and General Properties Company Limited, 1967); Erica McDonald and David J. Smith, *Artizans and Avenues: a History of the Queen's Park Estate* (London: City of Westminster Libraries, 1990).

‘workman’s city’ included a lecture hall and recreation ground. In the words of a report by the company: ‘It is proposed to erect on this estate 1200 houses suited respectively for clerks, artisans and labourers, in addition to a lecture hall, co-operative store, school rooms, baths, wash-houses, etc. A reservation of three acres is allotted for recreations and pleasure grounds...The houses will be so constructed as to combine elegance and comfort with economy; but as the Directors regard a healthy house as the cheapest, and in the long run the most comfortable, strict attention has been paid to secure dry and well roofed habitations.’²¹⁵ The estate was visited by Disraeli and others, who expressed their enthusiasm for the development.

The Artisans Labourers and General Dwellings Company was founded by William Austin, an illiterate Northampton builder, who felt that he owed his success to having renounced drink at the age of 47. In difference to Austin's strict temperance views, there were no pubs on the Shaftesbury Park Estate. In 1870, Austin was replaced as chairman of the company by a radical journalist and social reformer, Dr. John Baxter Langley.²¹⁶ Austin afterwards grumbled that ‘I’m no

²¹⁵ *Artizans Centenary*, p. 9.

²¹⁶ On Langley, see further *The Era of the Reform League: English Labour and Radical Politics*, ed. J. Breuilly, G. Niedhart and A. Taylor (Mannheim, 1995), p. 333. In 1876, Langley caused a storm in freemasonry by his trenchant opposition to the use of masonic funds for the restoration of cathedrals: Andrew Prescott, ‘Charles

scholar, so they outvoted me. I was too honest for them, so that's why they voted me out’. Langley himself was a controversial figure. He had cut his teeth as a radical journalist on the *Manchester Times* in the 1840s. He was one of the prime movers of the Reform League, which agitated for an extension of parliamentary suffrage. In 1858, Langley gave the ‘physical force’ chartist Ernest Jones financial support for his weekly newspaper, the *People's Paper*, but Jones was unhappy with Langley's more moderate political stance and the two soon fell out, with Jones eventually accusing Langley of selling out by taking a paid lectureship in support of a more moderate reform programme.²¹⁷ Langley was also deeply interested in social questions, supporting Charles Bradlaugh and Annie Besant when they were prosecuted for obscenity for publishing a book on methods of birth control. Langley supported Josephine Butler's campaign against the Contagious Diseases Acts, and at her behest stood as a parliamentary candidate in against this legislation at Colchester in 1870. During a public meeting in this campaign, rotten vegetables, chairs, and plaster and mortar from the ceiling were thrown at Langley and the clothes were literally torn from his back. Nevertheless, by splitting the liberal vote, Langley's candidature at

Bradlaugh and Freemasonry’ *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum*, forthcoming.

²¹⁷ Miles Taylor, *Ernest Jones, Chartism and the Romance of Politics 1819-1869* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 181, 183-5.

Colchester was a turning point in the campaign to repeal these acts.²¹⁸ Langley was a unitarian and an opponent of conventional churches and religion, establishing his own 'Church of the Future' and advocating the use of Sundays for educational purposes. Accordingly, not only was the Shaftesbury Park Estate free of pubs, but churches were also absent.

Among Langley's many enthusiasms was freemasonry. He was the first Inner Guard of Era Lodge No. 1423, which was consecrated at the King's Arms Hampton Court on 1 February 1873, becoming Junior Warden in 1874 and Master in 1876.²¹⁹ In that year, the Era Lodge established a Royal Arch chapter, and Langley was the founding J. He also served as Inner Guard of the Royal Oak Lodge No. 871, which met in Deptford. Langley was as controversial within freemasonry as he was in the outside world. He caused outrage when, supporting a campaign against the use of grand lodge funds for the restoration of cathedrals, he wrote to The Freemason claimed that the carvings of the front of cathedrals were remnants of phallus worship. Langley saw freemasonry as a means of helping to realise a wider social vision for the Shaftesbury Park Estate in Battersea. In 1874 Langley wrote to the Grand Secretary, John Hervey,

²¹⁸ Jane Jordan, *Josephine Butler* (London: John Murray, 2001), pp. 121-5.

²¹⁹ [F. O. Raynaud], *Era Lodge No. 1423: The First Hundred Years* (n.p.p., 1973), pp. 2, 19; *Era Chapter No. 1423: One Hundred Years of Progress 1876-1976* (n.p.p., 1976), p. 2.

describing the new estate at Battersea, and declaring that 'there is a desire on the part of the superior officials, superintendents of works and other residents on the estate to be admitted into masonry in a lodge connected with the new town; and the Directors cordially second that desire'.²²⁰ Langley himself would be the first master of the lodge, and the lodge would eventually meet in the public hall planned for the estate. Langley added that 'The petitioners specially desire that the first stone of the new lodge and public hall may be laid with masonic honours..'

The signatories of the petition were mostly people connected with the company who lived in various parts of London.²²¹ Only one gave his address as the

²²⁰ Correspondence accompanying the petition for the lodge, Library and Museum of Freemasonry. It seems that it proved impracticable to lay the memorial stone with masonic honours; a letter from Hervey to Langley on 16 August 1878, states that 'With regard to the laying of the memorial stone of the Artizan's buildings, I am afraid that at this season of the year it will be difficult to obtain the attendance of sufficiently distinguished and influential men': Grand Secretary's Letter Book 1876-7, Library and Museum of Freemasonry, f. 108.

²²¹ They were: Langley; Thomas Horton, secretary, of Oakley Street, Chelsea; Edward Fithian, Secretary, of Great College Street, Westminster; Frank John Lancaster, of the Architect's Department of the Metropolitan Board of Works, who lived in Tipthorpe Road, Lavender Hill; E Mallett, of Little Britain; Frankenburg; G. Mallick, physician, of Herne Bay; J. Elgood, solicitor, of Brunswick Square; John Shuttleton, confectioner, of Mare Street, Hackney; John Johnson, engineer, of Goswell Road; Stephen Lacey, gentleman, of

Shaftesbury Park Estate itself, a glass merchant named Solomon Frankenburg. The petition was granted, and it seems that the Grand Secretary himself assisted in the design of the new hall. However, in 1877 disaster overtook Langley. Much of the day-to-day supervision of the building work had been left to the Company Secretary, William Swindlehurst. There were rumours of irregularity in the handling of funds and inadequate purchasing procedures. In June 1877 the company appointed a committee of inquiry. It was found that the board had given Swindlehurst supplies of blank cheques and that he had taken some of the profits from the sale of company land.²²² A particular concern was that building materials had been purchased from a single merchant, Solomon Frankenburg, who had often charged twice the going rate.²²³ Frankenburg was, of course, a signatory of the petition for the Shaftesbury lodge. In July 1877 Swindlehurst and Langley were arrested for fraud, and in the following October they were sentenced to eighteen

Canonbury Place; Michael Underwood, manager, of Ludgate Hill; and Joshua Hollings Grigg, physician, of Albemarle Street, Piccadilly. None of these petitioners appear to have been Directors of the Artizans', Labourers' and General Dwellings Company, suggesting that the masonic mission to the Shaftesbury Park Estate was a personal enthusiasm of Langley's.

²²² The Artizans', Labourers', and General Dwellings Company Ltd., *Report of a Committee of Investigation appointed at an Extraordinary General Meeting of the Shareholders on the 2nd of June 1877* (London: National Press Agency, 1877), pp. 8-10.

²²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9; *Artizans' Centenary*, p. 16; McDonald and Smith, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-9.

months imprisonment.²²⁴ Langley was expelled from freemasonry, and the Pro Grand Master cancelled the warrant for the Shaftesbury lodge.²²⁵

The estate was nevertheless completed and the hall built. In 1882, some members of the Crichton lodge no. 1641 attempted to revive freemasonry on the Shaftesbury Park estate. The Crichton lodge was established in 1876 at the Surrey Masonic Hall, and most of its members were connected with the London School Board, its founders including the Superintendent and the Clerk of the Board.²²⁶ The leading light of the new lodge, which became the Duke of Albany no. 1963, was Robert James Voisey, a local schoolmaster who had been Master of the Crichton lodge.²²⁷ The two main reasons given for the

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²²⁵ The petition was cancelled on 28 August 1877.

²²⁶ The petition is printed and discussed in Andrew Prescott, 'The Study of Freemasonry as a New Academic Discipline', proceedings of OVN conference at Leiden March 2003, forthcoming.

²²⁷ On Voisey, see further below. The founders who signed the petition for the Duke of Albany Lodge were: Voisey; Robert James Vincent, schoolmaster, of Larkhall Lane, Clapham; Charles Wilson, schoolmaster, of Bloom Grove, Lower Norwood; William Thomas Pink, schoolmaster, of 29 Bridge Road West, Battersea; Robert Stokoe, schoolmaster, of Grayshott Villas, Shaftesbury Park Estate; Henry Maidment, schoolmaster, of Raywood Street, Battersea; John James White, schoolmaster, of Stormont Road, Lavender Hill; Vincent Marché, schoolmaster, of Gloucester Road, Camberwell; Charles Henry Stone, schoolmaster, of Soames Terrace, Denmark Park; George Gill, publisher, of Ramsden Road, Battersea; Thomas Harrap, vestry clerk, of Crown Terrace, Lavender Hill.

establishment of the new lodge in the petition was, again, the lack of masonic lodges in Battersea, and also the availability of a specially designed masonic hall on the Shaftesbury Park estate.²²⁸ Reflecting its origins in the Crichton lodge, many of the founders of the lodge were schoolmasters.

After three years, the Duke of Albany had had enough of the Shaftesbury Park Estate. A petition of the members complained that:

'1. The Lodge Room is too large for our numbers, is overcrowded with chairs and other furniture used for purposes extraneous to freemasonry, and is neither clean nor in comfortable repair. It is not adapted for the correct working of the third degree, and its entrance cannot be properly tiled. It is disfigured with notices of dance

²²⁸ 'The motives which impel us to seek this favour at the hands of your Royal Highness are, among others, the following:- 1. The Crichton Lodge, 1641, to which most of your petitioners belong, has been so successful...that it must soon cease to admit any more to the lodge. 2. The place and time of meeting of the Crichton Lodge are inconvenient to many gentlemen, our friends, who are anxiously seeking admission into freemasonry. 3. The only lodge held in Battersea for Battersea masons and intending candidates is the "Earl Spencer", all those formerly meeting in this district having been removed to "The Bridge House" and elsewhere. 4. We have been able to secure the Masonic Hall on the Shaftesbury Park Estate, which was originally built for Masonic purposes under the supervision of our late lamented Grand Secretary, for our meetings'. cf. Wilfred J. Wickham and E. John Stannard, *History of the Duke of Albany Lodge No. 1963* (n.p.p., 1982), pp. 2-3.

classes and smoking concerts, and the glazing of the daylight windows is most dangerously imperfect, causing much illness and suffering to the members and especially to the Worshipful Master and Officers. We may add that we only rent the premises from a yearly tenant, and that we may have notice to quit our occupation at very short time.

2. The ante-room is small and inconvenient for the work of the lodge.
3. The approaches are untidy and easily accessible to outsiders.
4. There are no conveniences whatever for the purposes of refreshment'

The last was a particularly intractable problem; the temperance character of the estate meant there was nowhere to go after lodge meetings. Moreover, the lodge had been unsuccessful in recruiting from the inhabitants of the estate itself, who were restricted to clerks and artisans. The failure of the two Shaftesbury Park lodges to recruit significant numbers of members from the inhabitants of the estate is striking. One of the most notable features of life on the estate was the large number of social organisations which flourished there. These included a Band of Hope, a dramatic club, a Friends of Labour loan society, a rifle corps, sports teams, an annual flower show and a lodge of the Good Templars. The failure of freemasonry to put down roots on the Shaftesbury Park estate may be ascribed to a number of reasons. Possibly the fees associated with

freemasonry may have been too expensive for the clerks and artisans who lived on the estate. However, many people of this social class were members of masonic lodges elsewhere, and there is no reason to think that, for such community leaders on the Shaftesbury Park estate as John Vooght who had been a member of the Clapham vestry, the fees charged by freemasonry were a barrier to membership. A bigger stumbling block for men such as Vooght, who were mostly teetotal, is more likely to have been the association of freemasonry with eating and drinking. As has already been noted, the difficulty of arranging a festive board on a temperance estate was a problem for the Duke of Albany Lodge. Whatever the explanation, it proved impossible to implant freemasonry on the Shaftesbury Park estate; wider social networks were necessary to nurture it.

The Duke of Albany Lodge moved to the Albert Palace, where the Earl Spencer lodge also met. The Albert Palace itself was by no means well suited for masonic meetings, since an admission fee was charged for entrance to the palace and it was necessary to show the summons to get reduced or free admission.²²⁹ While the lodge was at the Albert Palace, it recruited a number of shopowners and tradesmen in the immediate locality, such as Battersea Park Road and Queens' Road. With the bankruptcy of the Albert Palace, the lodge was forced, after a series of heated meetings, to move to the Surrey

Masonic Hall, although as the minutes note, 'a universal feeling was expressed that as the warrant was first granted on the understanding that it was to be a Battersea lodge, the Lodge should be brought back to Battersea whenever a convenient meeting place could be found...' This proved to be a forlorn hope, and the lodge never returned. As soon as the Lodge moved to Camberwell, its membership started to be drawn from a wider geographical area. In 1893, while some of the initiates were from Battersea, such as the manager of the public baths there, the majority were from many different parts of London, with some from as far afield as Watford and Southampton. While the Duke of Albany Lodge retained its strong links with educational professions, its Battersea connections gradually disappeared.

Robert Voisey, the first master of the Duke of Albany and the first schoolteacher to obtain London Rank, appears to have been a major influence in developing freemasonry in Battersea. A famous teacher training college was established in Battersea called the St John's Training College. With the expansion of educational provision in London through the work of the London School Board, many teachers trained at Battersea were appointed to posts in London. The Battersea Club was established for old members of the college, and it was suggested that a masonic lodge would help cement these social bonds. This led to the creation of the Sir Walter St

²²⁹ Wickham and Stannard, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

John Lodge No. 2513.²³⁰ Voisey served as Inner Guard at the consecration and, as an honorary member of the lodge, worked assiduously to build it up.²³¹ The lodge played a part in the establishment of the Union of Training College Lodges in 1914. Curiously, the lodge never met in Battersea, meeting first at the Surrey Masonic Hall, then afterwards at the Holborn Restaurant. Nevertheless, the Sir Walter St John Lodge illustrates how, while more general lodges in south London often lost their original local connections, those associated with specific local institutions frequently help preserve the memory of those bodies after they have disappeared. The training college was closed in 1923 and amalgamated with the college of St Mark in Chelsea. Marjons, as it was known, itself moved to Plymouth in 1973. The masonic lodge was opened to students of Marjons in 1931, and became completely open in 1934.²³² It still meets at the London Masonic Centre, and thus preserves memories of a Battersea institution which has now otherwise vanished.

A similar process can be observed with school lodges. Some old boys of two local grammar schools, Sir Walter St John's School and Battersea Grammar School, established a lodge for staff and old boys of the schools

in 1907, Old Sinjins lodge no. 3232. This was one of the first school lodges. One of its masters was the headmaster of Sir Walter St John's school and historian of Battersea, John George Taylor, and during his period of office a meeting of the lodge was held in the school's Great Hall. The lodge regularly held services in the ancient parish church of Battersea, and a number of vicars of Battersea joined the lodge. The school was closed in 1986, but the masonic lodge, although now open to all, remains very conscious of its connection with the school, and thus plays an important part in preserving the memory of this important Battersea institution. Similarly, another local grammar school, Emanuel, formed a lodge for old boys in 1933. This lodge was to play an important part in the formation of the Federation of School Lodges in 1947.

Institutional links of this kind seem to have been particularly important in fostering freemasonry in Battersea. These links were not confined to educational bodies. In 1917, Sowest lodge no. 3797 was formed, which met at first in Richmond, then moved to Stanley's. Most of the founders of this lodge worked for the London and South Western Railway. The lodge was active in sponsoring the formation of a number of other lodges in the area before the Second World War. Railway workers were one of the main occupational groups in Battersea, and an important focus of social activity. This link with a masonic lodge is therefore particularly interesting. A recent issue of the newsletter

²³⁰ Thomas Ansell, *A History of Sir Walter St John Lodge of Freemasons No. 2513* (London, 1944);

²³¹ Ansell, *op. cit.*, p. 6, 8, 11

²³² Ansell, *op. cit.*, p. 21

of the Friendly Societies Research Group drew attention to copies of the *South Western Gazette* in the Public Record Office, which was published in the 1880s and 1890s to support the company's widows and orphans fund. The paper helped campaign for the establishment of the Railway Guards Friendly Society. It would be interesting to establish how far there were links between the activities reported in the *South Western Gazette* and the formation of the Sowest lodge.

The history of these Battersea lodges thus suggests a number of important themes in understanding the history of freemasonry in the Greater London area.

Accommodation has been a recurrent issue. The difficulty of finding suitable local facilities encouraged lodges to move into central London, where they often lost their local character. This sense of local identity was frequently more effectively preserved by lodges based on local schools, companies and other institutions. Although the growth of freemasonry may seem unconnected with the radical politics of Battersea before the First World War, there were some interesting overlaps. The development of council services meant more public sector workers, and these local government often became masons. The socialist programme of the Council thus helped foster freemasonry. Both the middle classes and working classes of Battersea shared a common sense of civic patriotism, and a belief that clubs and societies were important in promoting this. Labour historians working on Battersea such as Sean Creighton have

vividly described the lively working class club culture of Battersea at this time. Creighton points out how the belief in the importance of sociability and conviviality reached across the class divide, although there were differences over how far leisure should be supported from the rates. Creighton describes the activities of Peter Haythornthwaite, the conservative Mayor of Battersea and staunch member of the Bolingbroke lodge, as a leading light of the Pioneer Cycling Club in Battersea. The overlaps between the membership of clubs such as the Pioneer club and the masonic lodges are important further areas for investigation.

The changes which overtook freemasonry in Battersea after the First World War reflect a complex range of issues: the nature and character of the expansion of masonic membership between 1919 and 1926; the growth of new suburbs; and the continuing question of accommodation. Nevertheless, by 1970 the situation had returned to that of a hundred years previously: no masonic lodges met in Battersea. However, this situation has changed in the past few months. The former premises of Sir Walter St John's School in Battersea High Street have reopened as a private preparatory school. The old school lodge, Old Sinjins, has taken the opportunity to move its meetings to the school. Freemasonry has returned to Battersea.

APPENDIX

PROVISIONAL LIST OF CRAFT LODGES AND ROYAL ARCH CHAPTERS CONNECTED WITH THE BATTERSEA AND WANDSWORTH AREAS OF SOUTH LONDON

The following is a preliminary attempt to list all craft lodges and associated Royal Arch chapters which have either met in or have strong institutional connections with the area which forms the modern London Borough of Wandsworth. As noted, the lack of any London equivalent of a provincial yearbook (apart from the solitary *London Masonic Handbook* published by London Management in 2000), together with the tendency of London lodges to move around the metropolitan area, sometimes even moving into adjoining provinces, makes it difficult to identify lodges connected with particular areas of London. The following list is therefore extremely tentative and should be treated with great caution.

Lodges have been identified from a variety of sources. Up to 1894, Lane's *Masonic Records 1717-1894* makes the identification of lodges from a particular place very straightforward. However, without the aid of a continuation of Lane the tracing of London lodges formed after 1894 is extremely difficult. The lists of lodges in the various editions of the *Masonic Yearbook* and the warrant books held in the Library and Museum

of Freemasonry provide the main source, but frequently lodges can only be identified as connected with an area of London if they have distinctive local names. It is certain that the following list omits some important lodges.

Details of the meeting places of lodges formed after 1894 have been derived from lodge histories, the lodge subject files held by the Library and Museum of Freemasonry and the *Masonic Yearbook*. The latest edition of the Directory of Lodges and Chapters in the *Masonic Yearbook* is 2000, so it is possible that some lodges may have changed their meeting place since 2000. There are frequently discrepancies between Lane, the *Masonic Yearbook* and lodge histories as to the exact year in which meeting places were changed. These can only be resolved by reference to the relevant lodge records, and it has not been possible to check all these discrepancies, so again dates for meeting places should be treated with caution.

Lodge histories held by the Library and Museum of Freemasonry are noted, but no attempt has been made to record histories of Royal Arch chapters. In some cases, lodges of instruction are still held in Battersea and Wandsworth even when the lodge itself has moved outside the area. No attempt has been made to record these. The identification of lodges, etc., associated with additional degrees raises a separate and even more

complex set of issues, and no attempt has been made to itemise these bodies here.

Lodge at the King's Arms, Wandsworth

A lodge was warranted by the Premier Grand Lodge to meet on 30 March 1723 at the Queens' Head, Great Queen Street, London. This moved the Turks' Head, South Street, Wandsworth, in 1753, and to the King's Arms in the High Street, Wandsworth, in 1757. It was erased on 20 November 1782, and restored 13 February 1788. It was finally erased again on 3 March 1830. Numbering as follows: 1729: 14; 1740: 13; 1755: 11; 1770: 11; 1780: 11; 1781: 11; 1792: 11; 1814: 21

Britannic Lodge No. 33 (named in 1774)

Warranted by the Premier Grand Lodge on 17 July 1730. Met at Rainbow Coffee House, York Buildings, London, from 1730-1739, then at Gun, Suffolk Street to 1746. In 1746, moved to the Bowling Green, Putney, then in 1758, to the Castle, Putney. In 1765, moved to the White Lion, Putney, 1765. Erased 23 April 1773, but reinstated soon afterwards. Met at the Thatched House Tavern, Pall Mall, from 1774, and thereafter has met in central London area. Numbering as follows: 1729: 75; 1740: 62; 1755: 37; 1770: 33; 1780: 29; 1781: 29; 1792: 27; 1814: 42; 1832: 38.

Wandsworth Lodge

A warrant was authorised on 9 July 1849 for a lodge to meet at the Spread Eagle Inn in Wandsworth, to be numbered 825, but the warrant never seems to have been issued and the lodge was erased in 1852.

Panmure Lodge No. 720

Warrant 2 October 1857; consecrated 30 November 1857. Numbered 1022 according to 1832 numeration; renumbered 720 in 1863. Sponsored by Domatic Lodge No. 177 and Lodge of United Pilgrims No. 507

Meeting places:

Swan Tavern, Clapham Road, Stockwell, 1857-1862
Loughborough Hotel, Loughborough Park, 1862-1867
Balham Hotel, Chestnut Grove, Balham, 1867-1909
Waldorf Hotel, Aldwych, 1909-1920
Holborn Restaurant, 1920-1922
Hotel Cecil, Strand, 1922-1930
Frascati's Restaurant, 1930-1935
Freemasons' Hall, 1935-1993
Duke of York's Barracks, King's Road, Chelsea, 1993 to date

Mother lodge of Crystal Palace Lodge No. 742,
Macdonald Lodge No. 1216, Royal Arthur Lodge No. 1360, Old England Lodge No. 1790, Veritas Lodge No. 4983

Preston Lodge No. 766 (renamed William Preston Lodge, 1867)

Warrant: 14 December 1858; consecrated 22 January 1859. Numbered 1068 under 1832 numeration; renumbered 766 in 1863. Sponsored by Beadon Lodge No. 619

Meeting places:

Star and Garter Hotel, Lower Richmond Road, Putney, 1859-1868

Clarendon Hotel, Anerley, 1868-1871

City Terminus Hotel, Cannon Street 1871-1940

Freemasons' Hall, 1940-1950

Charing Cross Hotel, 1950-1980

London Masonic Centre, Clerkenwell, 1980 to date

Royal Arch chapter consecrated 21 March 1874.

Edward Newton, *History of the William Preston Lodge No. 766 (1859-1959)* (London, 1959)

Wandsworth Lodge No. 1044

Warrant issued 9 Dec. 1864. Consecrated 3 May 1865 at the Freemasons' Hotel, Wandsworth Common. Sponsored by St Luke's Lodge No. 144.

Meeting places:

Freemasons' Hotel, Wandsworth Common, 1865-1870 (unauthorised meetings held at the Spread Eagle, Wandsworth, 1868)

The Spread Eagle, Wandsworth, 1870-1879

The Lecture Hall, Wesleyan Chapel, St John's Hill, 1879-1880

East Hill Hotel, Alma Road, 1880-1882 (Lane gives 1883)

Town Hall, Wandsworth, 1882-1889

East Hill Hotel, Alma Road, 1889-1895

Municipal Buildings, Lavender Hill, 1895-1902

Stanley's Restaurant, Lavender Hill, 1902-1908

Criterion Restaurant, Piccadilly, 1908-1921

Hotel Cecil, Strand, 1921-1931

Northumberland Rooms, Northumberland Avenue, 1931-1935

Freemasons' Hall, 1935 to date

Mother lodge of Wandle Lodge No. 2699 and Valentia Lodge No. 3097 ('a lodge primarily for candidates and joining brethren who had some connection with Oxfordshire')

A Royal Arch chapter attached to the lodge was consecrated in 1880. It was known as the Mid-Surrey Chapter, and met at Camberwell (presumably at the Surrey Masonic Hall). The chapter ceased to work in 1886, and was erased in 1895.

G. F. Pulleyn, *Wandsworth Lodge No. 1044: History of the Lodge*, 2nd ed., with additions by A. E. A. Prowting (n.p.p., [1965])

Earl Spencer Lodge No. 1420

Warrant issued 2 Nov. 1872; consecrated 31 May 1872.
Sponsored by Crystal Palace Lodge No. 742.

Meeting places:

Freemasons' Hotel, Wandsworth Common, 1872-1874

Northcote Hotel, Battersea Rise, 1874-1876

Swan Hotel, Battersea Bridge Road, 1876-1881

Craven Hotel, Lavender Hill, 1881-1886

Albert Palace, 1886-1888

Rock Tavern, Battersea Park Road, 1888-1889

White Lion Hotel, High Street Putney, 1889-1894

Stanley's Restaurant, Lavender Gardens, 1894-1910

Criterion Restaurant, Picadilly, 1910-1926

Prince's Piccadilly, 1926-1931

Holborn Restaurant, 1931-1935

Freemasons' Hall, 1935 to date

Mother lodge of Shaftesbury Lodge No. 1527 (warrant cancelled), Putney Lodge No. 2766, and Old Fraternity Lodge No. 3547

Royal Arch chapter consecrated in 1916

John Monk, *The History of Earl Spencer Lodge No. 1420 1873-1973* (n.p.p., n.d.)

Mount Edgcumbe Lodge No. 1446

Warrant issued 5 July 1873; consecrated 13 September 1873. Sponsored by Macdonald Lodge No. 1216.

Meeting places:

Swan Tavern, Battersea Bridge Road, 1873-1881 (the building pictured in W. J. B. Rowe, *Mount Edgcumbe Lodge No. 1446 1873-1973*, is The Old Swan in Battersea Church Road. The Swan Tavern was apparently immediately to the south of Battersea Bridge, and was demolished when the new bridge was built)

Bridge House Hotel, London Bridge, 1881-1897

Holborn Restaurant, Holborn, 1894-1954

Cafe Monico, 1954-1959

Cafe Royal, 1959-1967

Angus Steak House, Aldwych, 1967-1980

London Masonic Centre, Clerkenwell, 1980 to date

Royal Arch chapter consecrated 23 June 1885.

Mother lodge of Crest of Mount Edgcumbe Lodge No. 7431.

W. J. B. Rowe, *Mount Edgcumbe Lodge No. 1445: 1873-1973* (n.p.p., n.d.)

Shaftesbury Lodge No. 1527

Sponsored by Earl Spencer Lodge No.1420

Warrant was issued 26 December 1874. Intended to meet in the Shaftesbury Hall, Shaftesbury Park Estate. Following arrest of John Baxter Langley, the moving force behind the establishment of the lodge, the warrant was cancelled by the Pro Grand Master. The lodge was never constituted, and was erased on 28 August 1877.

Royal Commemoration Lodge No. 1585

Warrant issued 8 December 1875; consecrated 21 March 1875. Sponsored by Royal Arthur Lodge No. 1360 and Mount Edgcumbe Lodge No. 1446.

Meeting places:

Star and Garter Hotel, Lower Richmond Road, Putney, 1876-1878

Fox and Hounds Hotel, Upper Richmond Road, Putney, 1878-1890

White Lion Hotel, High Street, Putney from 1890-1900

Holborn Restaurant, Holborn, 1900-1954

Oxford Street Corner House, Oxford Street, 1954-1967

National Liberal Club, Whitehall Place, 1967-1974

Royal Commonwealth Society from 1974-1981

London Masonic Centre, Clerkenwell, 1981 to date

Royal Arch chapter consecrated 3 June 1922

Mother lodge of Column Lodge No. 5284, and Star of Friendship Lodge No. 6496

F. C. Baker, *Royal Commemoration Lodge No. 1585, Centenary History 1876-1976* (n.p.p., n.d.)

Clapham Lodge No. 1818

Consecrated 24 June 1879. Sponsored by the Royal Leopold Lodge No. 1669.

Meeting places:

Alexandra Hotel, Clapham Common, 1879-1880

Criterion Hotel 1880-1934

Freemasons' Hall, 1934 to date

Duke of Albany Lodge No. 1963

Warrant 8 March 1882; consecrated 4 May 1882. Sponsored by Crichton Lodge No. 1641.

Meeting places:

Masonic Hall, Shaftesbury Park Estate, 1882-1885

Albert Palace, 1885-1888

Surrey Masonic Hall, Camberwell New Road, Camberwell, 1888-1912

Frascati's Restaurant, 1912-1942

Freemasons' Hall, 1942-1995

Mark Masons' Hall, 1995 to date

Mother lodge of Lodge of Remembrance No. 4895, Pillar Lodge No. 5484, and Dextras Dare Lodge No. 7054

Wilfred J. Wickham and E. John Stannard, *History of the Duke of Albany Lodge No. 1963* (n.p.p., 1982)

Argonauts Lodge No. 2243

Warrant 6 January 1888; consecrated 12 March 1888. Sponsored by Tuscan Lodge No. 14. According to the petition, 'The Lodge is being started by amateur oarsmen belonging to various clubs on the Thames, the principal part being taken by the London Rowing Club, which is Head of the River, and the Thames Rowing Club which comes next, Bro. Monteuiis, a well-known oarsman of the London Rowing Club being the first W.M.'. Its membership was still in 1988 restricted to members of rowing clubs.

Meeting places:

Cromwell Hall, Putney Bridge Road, 1888-1893

Putney Constitutional Club, 1893-1898

Frascati Restaurant, Oxford Street, 1898-1903

Imperial Restaurant, Regent Street, 1903-1926 ('in pursuit of the Manager, Mr. A. Oddenino, in the well-founded conviction that in catering terms his was a star to be followed..')

Royal Adelaide Galleries, King William Street, 1926-1935

Cafe Royal, Regent Street, 1935-1940

10 Duke Street, St James/Cafe Royal (alternating), 1940-1942

Freemasons' Hall / Holborn Restaurant (alternating), 1942-1945

Cafe Royal, Regent Street, 1946-1969

Lloyd's Library, 3 and 4 Lime Street, 1969-1975

Old Committee Room, Lloyd's, Leadenhall Street, 1975-1979

Freemasons' Hall, 1979-1980

The City of London Club, 19 Broad Street, 1980-1992

Kingsley Hotel (now Thistle Bloomsbury Hotel), Bloomsbury Way, 1992 to date

Mother lodge of Windmill Lodge No. 6547 (a golfing lodge) and Remigium Lodge No. 7343 (another rowing lodge).

[Dacre Simpson Harvey], *The Argonauts Lodge No. 2243 1888-1988* (London, 1988)

Bolingbroke Lodge No. 2417

Warrant 5 November 1891; consecrated: 6 January 1892. Sponsored by Duke of Fife Lodge No. 2345.

Meeting places:

Stanley Hall, Cairns Road, Northcote Road, 1891-1892

St Mark's School, Battersea Rise, 1892-1894

Municipal Buildings, Lavender Hill, 1894-1905

Stanley's Restaurant, Lavender Hill, 1905-1942
Ardington Rooms, Clapham Junction, 1947-1970
4 Whitehall Court 1970-1971
Clarendon Restaurant, Hammersmith Broadway, 1971-1980
Freemasons' Hall, 1980 to date

A Royal Arch Chapter is attached to the lodge

Mother lodge of St Michael Le Querne Lodge No. 2697,
Lodge of Affinity No. 4164, Macaulay Lodge No. 5010,
and Bucklebury Lodge No. 8129

Sir Walter St John Lodge No. 2513

Consecrated 28 June 1894. Sponsored by Crichton Lodge No. 1641.

Meeting places:
Surrey Masonic Hall, Camberwell New Road,
Camberwell, 1894-1898
Holborn Restaurant, 1898-1955
Wingfield House, Stockwell, 1955-1980
London Masonic Centre, Clerkenwell, 1980 to date

Royal Arch chapter consecrated 30 September 1944

Mother lodge of Old Sinjins lodge No. 3232

Thomas Ansell, *A History of Sir Walter St John Lodge of Freemasons No. 2513* (London, 1944); E. C. B. Doe, *A Short History of the Sir Walter St John Lodge* (n.p.p.; 1994).

Wandle Lodge No. 2699

Consecrated 21 March 1898. Sponsored by the Wandsworth Lodge No. 1044.

Meeting places:
Wandsworth Town Hall, 1898-1904
Stanley's Restaurant, Lavender Hill, 1904-1939
Freemasons' Hall, 1939 to date

Royal Arch chapter consecrated 26 April 1909, which also met at Stanley's Restaurant.

Mother lodge of Sowest Lodge No. 3797, Southfields
Lodge No. 4588, Prolate Lodge No. 5029, Graveney
Lodge No. 5285 and Temple Porchway Lodge No. 7209.

G. H. Rixson, *The Wandle Lodge No. 2699: Jubilee Year 1948...History* (n.p., [1948])

Putney Lodge No. 2766

Consecrated 21 July 1899. Sponsored by Earl Spencer Lodge No. 1420.

Meeting places:

Parish Offices, Putney, 1899-1901

Winchester House, Lower Richmond Road, 1901-1976

Hurlingham Club, 1976-1991

Cole Court Masonic Centre, Twickenham, 1991 to date.

On moving to Cole Court, the lodge joined the Provincial Grand Lodge of Middlesex.

Mother lodge of Wandsworth Borough Council Lodge

No. 2979, Fairfax Lodge No. 3014, South West

Polytechnic Lodge No. 3680, Think and Thank Lodge

No. 4112, East Sheen Lodge No. 4173, and Putney

Bridge Lodge No. 6686

A Royal Arch chapter attached to the lodge was granted a charter in August 1902 and consecrated in October 1902. However, the lodge is not shown as possessing a Royal Arch chapter in the 2000 *Directory of Lodges and Chapters*.

Allan Beaver, *Middlesex Matters, A History of Middlesex Freemasonry in celebration of the 125th anniversary of the founding of the province on 22nd January 1870* (Addlestone: Ian Allan, 1995), pp. 292-293

The Putney Lodge No. 2766...1899-1974 (n.p.p., 1974).

Wandsworth Borough Council Lodge No. 2979

Consecrated 24 Sept 1903. Sponsored by Putney Lodge No. 2766.

Meeting places:

Trocadero, 1903-1922

Hotel Cecil, Strand, 1922-1931

Hotel Rembrandt, Thurloe Place, South Kensington, 1930-1956

Kensington Palace Hotel, De Vere Gardens, Kensington, 1956-1971

Dominions Hotel (afterwards Lancaster Gate Hotel), Lancaster Gate, 1971-1975

Wessex House, St John's Hill, 1975-1981

Winchester House, Lower Richmond Road, Putney, 1981-1983

South East London Masonic Hall, Penge, 1983 to date

Mother lodge of Lodge of St Mary Balham No. 3661, Wandsworthians Lodge No. 5365, Clapham Park Lodge No. 5446, Wandle Park Lodge No. 5508, Earlsfield Lodge No. 5745, and Balham Park Lodge No. 6955

Fairfax Lodge No. 3014

Consecrated 4 March 1904. Sponsored by Putney Lodge No. 2766.

Meeting Places:

The Railway Hotel, Putney, 1903-1918

The Clarendon Hotel, Hammersmith, 1918-1979

Richmond Hill Hotel, Richmond, 1979-1991
West London Masonic Centre, Churchfield Road, West
Ealing, 1991 to date

A Royal Arch Chapter attached to the lodge.

Fairfax Lodge No. 3014: Jubilee 1904-1954 (n.p.p., n.d.)

Lavender Hill Lodge No. 3191

Consecrated 29 November 1906. Sponsored by Burgoyne
Lodge No. 902.

Meeting places:

Stanley's Restaurant, Lavender Hill, 1906-1938
Freemasons' Hall, 1938 to date

Royal Arch chapter consecrated on 18 May 1923

Mother lodge of Continuity Lodge No. 4651 and United
Friendship Lodge No. 5746

Old Sinjins Lodge No. 3232

Consecrated 29 April 1907. Sponsored by Sir Walter St
John Lodge No. 2513.

Meeting places:

Gaiety Restaurant, Strand, 1907-1911

Pagani's Restaurant, Strand, 1911-1941

Freemasons' Hall, 1941-1995

Duke of York's Headquarters, King's Road, 1995-2002

Former premises of Sir Walter St John's Grammar

School, Battersea High Street, 2002

J. G. Taylor, *A Short History of the Old Sinjins Lodge*
(No. 3232) (Chelsea: George White, 1935); John F.
Nichols, *Notes on the History of the Old Sinjins Lodge*
No. 3232, (Battersea: E. C. Freeman, 1957)

Balham Lodge No. 3388

Consecrated on 5 October 1909.

Meeting places:

Balham Hotel, Balham, 1909-1936

Ardington Rooms, Clapham Junction, 1936-1970

Clarendon Restaurant, Hammersmith Broadway, 1970-
1979

Coburg Hotel, 129 Bayswater Road, 1979-1981

London Masonic Centre, Clerkenwell, 1981-1982

National Liberal Club, Whitehall Place, 1982-1986

London Masonic Centre, Clerkenwell, 1986-1993

Park Court Hotel, Lancaster Gate, 1993-1995

Masonic Hall, Oakfield Road, West Croydon, 1995 to
date. On moving to Croydon, the lodge transferred to the
Province of Surrey.

A Royal Arch chapter attached to this lodge was consecrated on 27 September 1944. In 1978, the chapter transferred to the Province of Surrey, but since Balham Lodge was not at that time willing to make a similar transfer the chapter was attached to the Streatham Vale Lodge No. 5623.

Lodge of St Mary Balham No. 3661

Warrant 14 April 1913; consecrated 10 June 1913. 'The lodge takes its name from the Parish Church of St Mary Balham, and its foundation arose from a conversation between a few members of the Church, while engaged in some special parish work'. Sponsored by Wandsworth Borough Council Lodge No. 2979.

Meeting place: Freemasons' Hall, 1913 to date

Royal Arch chapter attached to the lodge.

Mother lodge of Streatham Hill Lodge No. 3784 and Tooting Bec Lodge No. 6837

[D. Bryant], *Lodge of St Mary Balham 3661, 1913-1934* (n.p.p., n.d.)

Sowest Lodge No. 3797

Consecrated 27 September 1917 at Freemasons' Hall, Great Queen Street. Sponsored by Wandle Lodge No. 2699.

Meeting places:

Greyhound Hotel, Richmond, 1917-1919

Stanley's Restaurant, Lavender Hill, 1919-1940

Ardington Rooms, Clapham Junction, 1940-1992

Cole Court Masonic Centre, Twickenham, 1992-1999

South East London Masonic Centre, Penge, 1999 to date

A Royal Arch chapter was consecrated on 24 February 1921, and also met at the Ardington Rooms.

Subsequently moved to Gardners Restaurant, London Bridge, Tolaini's Restaurant, Wardour Street, and the Star and Garter, Kew Bridge. Following a serious fire, moved to Cole Court Masonic Centre, Twickenham. This required the chapter to become a Middlesex chapter, so chapter became attached to Victory Lodge No. 6191, a daughter lodge of Sowest lodge.

Mother lodge of Wilberforce Lodge No. 5186 and Victory Lodge No. 6191

Beaver, *op. cit.*, p. 338

Sowest Lodge No. 3797: Short History of the Lodge 1917-1967 [included in brochure for Jubilee Meeting, 29th September 1967]

Sowest Lodge No. 3797 75th Anniversary 1917-1992 (Twickenham, 1992)

Southfields Lodge No. 4588

Consecrated 30 November 1923. Sponsored by Wandle Lodge No. 2699.

Meeting places:

Park Tavern, Merton Road, Southfields, 1923-1929
Stanley's Restaurant, Lavender Hill, 1929-1942
Freemasons' Hall, 1942 to date

Continuity Lodge No. 4651

Consecrated 3 November 1924. Developed from the Second Lodge of Instruction of Sowest Lodge No. 3797, but sponsored by Lavender Hill Lodge No. 3191.

Meeting places:

Stanleys Restaurant, Lavender Hill, 1924-1936
Freemasons' Hall, 1936-1990
London Masonic Centre, Clerkenwell, 1990-1992
Corvino's Restaurant, Beaufort House, Middlesex Street, 1992 to date

Mother lodge of Perpetua Lodge No. No. 7246. In 1990 Continuity and Perpetua Lodge merged to form Continuity and Perpetua Lodge No. 4651.

M. H. S. Bradish, *Continuity and Perpetua Lodge No. 4651 1924-1999* (London, 1999)

Prolate Lodge No. 5029

Consecrated 12 October 1928. Sponsored by Wandle Lodge

Meeting places:

Cafe Royal, Regent Street, 1928-1980
London Masonic Centre, Clerkenwell, 1980 to date

Wilberforce Lodge No. 5186

Consecrated 13 October 1930. Sponsored by Sowest Lodge No. 3797. All records of this lodge prior to 1950 have been lost.

Meeting places:

Stanley's Restaurant, Lavender Hill, 1930-1938
Ardington Rooms, Clapham Junction, 1938-1970
Royal Angus Hotel, 39 Coventry Street, 1970-1975
Coburg Hotel, 129 Bayswater Road, Bayswater, 1975-1980
London Masonic Centre, Clerkenwell, 1980 to date

Royal Arch chapter consecrated 19 May 1949

Mother lodge of Broomwood Lodge No. 6060

Graveney Lodge No. 5285

Consecrated 21 May 1931. Sponsored by Wandle Lodge No. 2699.

Meeting Places:

Rembrandt Hotel, Thurloe Place, South Kensington, 1931-1933

Ardington Rooms, Clapham Junction, 1933-1978

Clarendon Restaurant, Hammersmith, 1978-1980

London Masonic Centre, Clerkenwell, 1980

Masonic Hall, Staines, 1980 to date. On moving to Staines, the lodge joined the Provincial Grand Lodge of Middlesex.

Beaver, *op. cit.*, p. 318

Wandsworthians Lodge No. 5365

Consecrated 15 July 1932. Sponsored by Wandsworth Borough Council Lodge No. 2979.

Meeting Places:

Ardington Rooms, Clapham Junction, 1932-1968

Wimbledon Hill Hotel, Wimbledon, 1968-1976

Wessex House, St John's Hill, 1976-1993

Masonic Hall, Grove Road, Sutton, 1993-1999. On moving to Sutton, the lodge joined the Provincial Grand Lodge of Surrey.

Stoneleigh Inn, Stoneleigh, Surrey, 1999 to date

Royal Arch chapter formed in 1948

Mother lodge of Lumen Lodge No. 5786 and Piscator Lodge No. 7557 .

[D. C. Ferne], *A History of the Wandsworthians Lodge No. 5365* (n.p., [1982])

Old Emanuel Lodge No. 5399

Consecrated 6 March 1933. Sponsored by the Westminster City School Lodge No. 4305.

Meeting places:

Hotel Rembrandt, Thurloe Place, South Kensington, 1933-1951

Stanley's Masonic Hall, Lavender Hill, 1951-1954

Fleming's Restaurant, Oxford Street, 1954-1955

Bridge House Restaurant, 1955-1957

Star and Garter Hotel, Richmond, 1957-1972

Wessex Hotel Clapham Junction 1972-1979

Mark Masons' Hall, St James', 1979-1983

Freemasons' Hall 1983-1998

Park Court Hotel, Lancaster Gate, 1998-1999

Blakemore Hotel, 30 Leinster Gardens, 1999 to date

J. N. Cook, *Old Emanuel Lodge No. 5399: Fifty Years On - Research and Recollections* (n.p.p., 1986)

Clapham Park Lodge No. 5446

Warrant 6 December 1933. Consecrated 31 January 1934. Sponsored by Wandsworth Borough Council Lodge No. 2979.

Meeting places:

Carpenters Restaurant, Clapham, 1932-1949
Ardington Rooms, Clapham Junction, 1949-1968
The Dog and Fox Hotel, Wimbledon, 1968-1973
The Wessex Rooms, Clapham Junction, 1973-1980
London Masonic Centre, Clerkenwell, 1980-1992
Cole Court Masonic Centre, Twickenham, 1992 to date.
On moving to Twickenham, the lodge joined the Provincial Grand Lodge of Middlesex.

Royal Arch chapter consecrated in 1938.

Beaver, *op. cit.*, p. 320; *Clapham Park Lodge No. 5446: Golden Jubilee 1934-1984* (n.p.p., 1984)

Wandle Park Lodge No. 5508

Warrant 7 November 1934; consecrated at Freemasons' Hall 17 December 1934. Sponsored by Wandsworth Borough Council Lodge No. 2979.

Meeting places:

Cafe Monico, Shaftesbury Avenue, 1934-1942
Freemasons' Hall, 1942 to date

Wandle Park Lodge No. 5508: Installation Meeting and 50th Anniversary (n.p., [1985]).

Earlsfield Lodge No. 5745

Consecrated 1938. Sponsored by the Wandsworth Borough Council Lodge No. 2079.

Meeting places:

Ardington Rooms, Clapham Junction, 1938-1969
Royal Angus Hotel, 39 Coventry Street, 1969-1972
Angus Steak House, 74 Regent Street, 1972-1978
Wessex House, St John's Hill, Clapham Junction, 1978-1980
National Liberal Club, Whitehall Place, 1980-1982
Freemasons' Hall, 1982 to date

United Friendship Lodge No. 5746

Consecrated 1 June 1938. Sponsored by Lavender Hill Lodge No. 3191.

Meeting places:

Stanley's Restaurant, Lavender Hill, 1938-1945
Ardington Rooms, Clapham Junction, 1945-1969
Fountain Hotel, Garratt Lane, 1969-1973
Cole Court Masonic Centre, Twickenham, 1973 to date.
On moving to Cole Court, the lodge joined Provincial Grand Lodge of Middlesex.

When Wilberforce Chapter No. 5186 (attached to Wilberforce Lodge No. 5186 and consecrated in 1949) moved to Cole Court in 1991, it was necessary that it should become attached to a Middlesex lodge. The chapter had previously had close relations with United Friendship Lodge, so became United Friendship Chapter.

Mother lodge of United Continuity Lodge No. 7096

Beaver, *op. cit.*, pp. 325-6

Broomwood Lodge No. 6060

Consecrated 1945. Sponsored by Wilberforce Lodge No. 5186.

Meeting places:

Ardington Rooms, Clapham Junction, 1946-1970
Great Western Royal Hotel, Paddington, 1970-1982
London Masonic Centre, Clerkenwell, 1982 to date

Victory Lodge No. 6191

Consecrated 7 January 1946. Sponsored by Sowest Lodge No. 3797.

Meeting places:

Ardington Rooms, Clapham Junction, 1945-1959
Oxford Corner House, 14 Oxford Street, 1959-1966

Ardington Rooms, Clapham Junction, 1966-1970
Cole Court Masonic Centre, Twickenham, Middlesex, 1970 to date. On moving to Cole Court, the lodge transferred to the Provincial Grand Lodge of Middlesex.

A Royal Arch Chapter is attached to this lodge.

Beaver, *op. cit.*, p. 338

Wendlesworth Lodge No. 6640

Consecrated 4 June 1948. Sponsored by Prolate Lodge no. 5029

Meeting places:

Piccadilly Hotel, Piccadilly, 1948-1982
St Olave's Hall, Hart Street, London, 1982-1986
London Masonic Centre, Clerkenwell, 1986 to date

Putney Bridge Lodge No. 6686

Consecrated 13 September 1948. Sponsored by Putney Lodge No. 2766

Meeting places:

Winchester House, Lower Richmond Road, 1948-1982
Star and Garter Hotel, Kew Bridge, 1982-1985
Park Royal Hotel, Western Avenue, 1985-1987
West London Masonic Centre, Churchfield Road, Ealing, 1987 to date

Balham Park Lodge No. 6955

Consecrated 4 April 1950. Sponsored by Wandsworth Borough Council Lodge No. 2979.

Meeting places:

Ardington Rooms, Clapham Junction, 1950-1970

National Liberal Club, Whitehall Place, 1970-1985

Wessex House, St Johns Hill, 1985-1987

South East London Masonic Centre, Penge, 1987 to date

A Body without a Soul? The Philosophical Outlook of British Freemasonry 1700-2000

*Paper given at conferences organised by the Free
University of Brussels, Cornerstone Society and
Canonbury Masonic Research Centre, November-
December 2003*

Let me start by showing you a short newsreel film. It shows the Provincial Grand Master of Kent, Lord Cornwallis, laying the foundation stone of a new church in the Kentish town of Birchington-on-Sea on 31 October 1932.

*Film of laying of foundation stone of church at
Birchington-on-Sea 31 October 1932. A low resolution
copy of this clip can be downloaded at:*

http://www.britishpathe.com/product_display.cfm?searchfilm=freemasons+kent

Masonic ceremonies for the laying of the foundation stones of public buildings were commonplace in Britain up to the Second World War. These included not only churches, but also railway stations, bridges, docks, hospitals, schools and even a Turkish bath. However,

these ceremonies were most frequently held for churches. The most celebrated masonic foundation stone ceremony took place in 1880 when Edward VII as Prince of Wales laid the foundation stone of Truro Cathedral, the first cathedral to be consecrated in Britain since the Reformation. Similar ceremonies were also held for building works at many other cathedrals in the nineteenth century, such as Rochester, Peterborough and Liverpool, and freemasons gave substantial financial assistance to these works. In 1882, the vicar designate of a new church in Dulwich to the south of London wrote to Grand Lodge requesting that the foundation stone of his church should be laid by freemasons. He explained that he was not a freemason himself, but he wished to 'enlist and attach for the work of the church a cause which I see binds men so wonderfully together'. Masonic processions were not held only in connection with foundation stone ceremonies. In 1931, the new Bishop of Hereford was enthroned, and the occasion was marked by four processions in the town. The first consisted of the parochial clergy of the diocese; the second of the mayor and corporation; and the third of the Queen's representative, the Lord Lieutenant, the Sheriffs, and other high dignitaries. The fourth procession comprised freemasons in regalia, in honour of the new Bishop's rank as Grand Chaplain.

Such events vividly encapsulate the ideological and philosophical character of British freemasonry. It is rooted in the local community, drawing its membership

from the respectable middle classes. It is deeply engaged with the monarchy and aristocracy, and, above all, it has an intimate relationship with the churches, and in England particularly with the established Anglican church. For French freemasons arriving in Britain as refugees after Louis Napoleon's *coup d'etat* in 1851, such scenes were astonishing, and in their opinion bore little relationship to freemasonry. Many were republicans and freethinkers, and they objected to the prominence of clergymen in English freemasonry and its support for the monarchy. They also found the cost of English freemasonry prohibitive. Rather than joining craft freemasonry, they continued their masonry by joining the Order of Memphis, which was not recognised by the English Grand Lodge. Keen to encourage English working men to become freemasons, they founded lodges under the Order of Memphis in London, Birmingham and elsewhere. The English Grand Lodge issued a circular barring English freemasons from having anything to do with these lodges or the French masons. Infuriated, the French masons appealed for support from their fellow countrymen, issuing circulars violently denouncing English freemasonry. They described how in England the functions performed by an orator in France were fulfilled by clergymen, and described English freemasonry as Jesuitical. Although English freemasonry had built great institutions for its children, the elderly and the infirm, these were closed to anyone who did not believe in God or was a republican. The masonic schools did not offer a purely secular education. English

Freemasonry was, in the view of these French freemasons, a body without a soul:

‘Ses travaux sont consacrés a quelques momeries, et surtout à la gourmandaise’.

These criticisms fuelled the growing tensions between the English Grand Lodge and the Grand Orient of France. English freemasonry clearly did have a soul, but it was bound up with the Bibles in its lodge rooms, as the increasingly bitter exchanges between the French and English masonic press indicated. The French journal *Le Monde Maçonnique* criticised English freemasons for making presentations to cathedrals, and urged them to devote themselves to moral architecture. In reply, the English weekly *The Freemason* criticised continental freemasonry as excessively mystical and denounced its views of philosophy, fraternity and universality as chimerical. It declared that the English point of view was more sure. Grounded in recognition of the supreme being, it did not exclude anyone of any religion. It relied on the Bible as a standard. English freemasonry had no philosophical aspirations or mystical illuminations, but rather simple and touching ceremonies: ‘Non-christian we are not, as opposed to Christians, but universal we are, in our scope and constitution.’

The United Grand Lodge of England produces an official statement on freemasonry and religion which is available on its web site and elsewhere. This stresses that

freemasonry is not a religion, but that freemasonry supports religion. The Bible is open at all lodge meetings, and every freemason is instructed to place above all other duties his duty to God, by whatever name he is known. This carefully balanced statement reflects a tension as to the exact relationship of freemasonry to the christian religion which goes back as far as the establishment of English Grand Lodge in 1717 and which is at the heart of the philosophical nature of English freemasonry. I would like to explore this theme further by looking briefly at six British masons who were particularly engaged with this issue. Some, such as William Stukeley, William Preston and George Oliver, are well-known in British masonic history. The other three, Godfrey Higgins, John Baxter Langley and Sir Herbert Dunnico, are more obscure, but in many ways even more interesting.

In 1726, Sir Isaac Newton received a visitor at his London residence. They looked at the proofs of the new edition of Newton’s *Principia Mathematica*, and discussed Solomon’s Temple, which Newton considered to be the prototype of the great temples in Egypt and Greece. Newton’s guest was the young physician and clergyman William Stukeley. Stukeley epitomised the wide-ranging intellectual interests of the period. He was a senior official of the College of Physicians, discussed astronomy with Newton and Halley, and helped establish

the Society of Antiquaries. He is today best known for his work in documenting prehistoric monuments such as Stonehenge and Avebury. He had been fascinated by old buildings since childhood, learning how to measure height and making model buildings with miniature bricks he had moulded himself. On going to London, he became friendly with the builders working on St Pauls and attended the topping-out ceremony for the cathedral. But Stukeley was not simply interested in old buildings for their own sake. Like Newton, he felt they held a key to understanding the biblical origin of all religion. He was seeking the Newtonian laws of religion.

Stukeley's insatiable curiosity led him in 1721 to become a freemason. He suspected masonry 'to be the remains of the mystery of the ancients'. Although the London Grand Lodge had been founded four years previously, Stukeley claimed that it was difficult to find sufficient freemasons to initiate him. He regretted the subsequent changes in freemasonry, writing that shortly after he was initiated 'it took a run, and ran itself out of breath through the folly of its members'. Nevertheless, Stukeley remained committed to freemasonry, and one of his first actions after moving to Grantham in Lincolnshire in 1726 was to establish a freemasons' lodge there.

Recent scholarship has emphasised the fundamental contribution of the Huguenot clergyman and scientist Jean Theophilus Desaguliers to the early development of English freemasonry, but we have little direct evidence

of the nature of his contribution. It has been assumed that James Anderson in compiling the Book of Constitutions for Grand Lodge was guided by Desaguliers, but Anderson's criticism of those who saw God as simply a clockmaker or architect was apparently directed at Newtonians like Desaguliers, and suggests that Anderson has his own strong views on the relationship between freemasonry and religion. Stukeley's writings provide a further reminder that the early development of English freemasonry was the work of a group of men who had divergent religious views. Stukeley knew Desaguliers, but for him the more significant figures were the Duke of Montagu, the Duke of Richmond and Martin Folkes, all of whom served as Grand Master. Stukeley lamented that all these men were irreligious, singling out the influence of Martin Folkes as particularly malign. He complained that Folkes 'professes himself a godfather to all monkeys, believes nothing of a future state, of the Scriptures, of revelation'. He accused Folkes of perverting the Duke of Montagu, the Duke of Richmond and many other noblemen. In Stukeley's view, half the philosophers in London were infidels and the other half fanatics. This he declared made it impossible 'to keep a golden medium, or to see the great beauty of the Church of England in particular, of religion in general'.

The early development of Grand Lodge reflected a variety of reactions to the challenge posed by Newton to conventional religion. For Whig noblemen such as Montagu or Folkes, it provided a means of pursuing

essentially Deist ideas. It seems from Desaguliers' poem on 'The Newtonian System of the World' as a model of government that for Desaguliers it provided a means of keeping these different philosophical and religious views in harmony. But perhaps the most original view was that of Stukeley, for whom freemasonry seems to have provided a key to understanding how earlier religions prefigured the modern religious settlement of the Church of England. For Stukeley, freemasonry provided a link back to the Druids, those Ancient British priests who were to haunt English freemasonry.

It is impossible here to give a full account of the important contribution of Scottish freemasonry to masonic ideology in Britain. Modern freemasonry first developed in Scotland, and Scots continued to exert a major influence on English freemasonry during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The importance of the Scottish contribution is illustrated by this man, William Preston, the foremost masonic teacher in England at the turn of the nineteenth century. Preston was a Scottish printer who, on moving to London, became manager of Strahan's, the largest publishers in London. He supervised the publication of some of the most famous books of the time, such as Johnson's *Dictionary* and Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, and was considered one of London's finest judges of literary style. Preston was initiated as a mason

in London in a lodge of Scotsmen operating under the Antients Grand Lodge, but soon switched his allegiance to the Premier Grand Lodge. He became Master of the Lodge of Antiquity, one of the four lodges which had formed the Premier Grand Lodge in 1717. Preston had an elevated view of the rights of his lodge, which eventually led to a titanic dispute with Grand Lodge.

On becoming Master, Preston wanted to find out more about the precepts of freemasonry, but could not find a satisfactory guide. He formed a reading group with a few masonic friends to discuss the ritual and its lessons. They felt that there was a need for a 'general reformation' of freemasonry which would encourage a more elevated view of its doctrines. In their opinion, unsuitable people became freemasons and rushed through the various degrees without understanding the lessons that they taught. Preston and his friends organised a gala under the auspices of Grand Lodge at which they spoke on the moral significance of each degree. Preston published the lectures under the title *Illustrations of Masonry*. As the book was reprinted, he gradually developed it into a manual of masonic philosophy which was profoundly influential in both Britain and the United States.

Preston's book opened with a 'Vindication of Masonry' which encapsulates the philosophy of late-eighteenth-century English freemasonry. According to Preston, the roots of freemasonry lay in the contemplation of the symmetrical beauties of nature which revealed the hand

of a divine creator.: ‘Whoever attentively observes the objects which surround him will find abundant reason to admire the works of nature and to adore the being who directs such astonishing operations’. For Preston freemasonry gave an opportunity to learn virtue by paying ‘rational homage’ to this deity. His efforts towards more dignified and solemn masonic practice were designed to enhance this message. As such, Preston’s work can be seen as part of the ‘reformation of manners’ in Britain at this time, but Preston also stressed the universal message of freemasonry: ‘the distant Chinese, the wild Arab, and the American savage will embrace a brother Briton and know that besides the common ties of humanity there is a still stronger obligation to induce him to kind and friendly offices’.

Despite this internationalist message, Preston’s work reflects increasing tensions caused by the growth of the British Empire. In 1776, Lord Moira initiated the Persian ambassador Mirza Abul, and a few years later a Muslim son of the Nawab of the Carnatic was initiated at Madras. References to, for example, the use of the Bible in the earlier editions of Preston’s work became increasingly inappropriate, and Preston in later editions stated that the volume of the sacred law should be whatever is understood to contain the word of God. Preston left no doubt however that he regarded christianity as the higher faith. In ushering through the Union between the two English Grand Lodges in 1813, the Duke of Sussex, who had been present at Mirza Abul’s initiation, was anxious

that the new Grand Lodge should help bind together the British Empire. Specifically christian references in the Book of Constitutions were dropped, but the Duke’s ruling in 1840 that Muslims and Hindus could become freemasons caused consternation in India, and it was many years before District Grand Lodges in India were willing to admit Hindus. Even then influential freemasons in India continued to protest that only christians could truly understand masonry.

Preston’s urbane depiction of freemasonry as a natural religion seems far removed from Stukeley’s speculations about the druids, but the druids had not been forgotten. Preston himself gives a romanticised account of the druids, suggesting that they preserved secrets discovered by Pythagoras and that there were affinities between freemasonry and the druidic philosophy. The suggestion of a links between druids and freemasonry became the foundation of even more exotic speculations by one of the most remarkable British freemasons, Godfrey Higgins. Higgins inherited a large estate near Doncaster in Yorkshire. When Napoleon threatened invasion, Higgins became a major in the local militia but fell ill and resigned his commission. Becoming a local justice, he interested himself in social issues. He campaigned for better treatment of the insane and built a model asylum at Wakefield. He was invited to become a radical MP, but declined.

He was reluctant to pursue a political career because he had become deeply interested in the history of religion. His illness had prompted him to devote himself to the study of philosophy, and he decided to investigate the evidence for christianity. This developed into a study of the nature of all religions, and eventually became an investigation of the origins of language and nations. Higgins ruefully recollected that 'Ultimately I came to a resolution to devote six hours a day to this pursuit for ten years. Instead of six hours daily for ten years, I believe I have, upon the average, applied myself to it for nearly ten hours daily for almost twenty years. In the first ten years of my search I may fairly say, I found nothing which I sought for; in the latter part of the twenty, the quantity of matter has so crowded upon me, that I scarcely know how to dispose of it'.

The idea that freemasonry preserved the ancient learning of the Druids had been popularised in the eighteenth century by John Cleland, the author of the pornographic novel, *Fanny Hill*. The radical writer and deist Thomas Paine wrote an essay arguing that freemasonry preserved the ancient sun religion which was the root of all religions and of which christianity was a blasphemous perversion. Higgins took this idea further. In 1826, Higgins published a pioneering study of *The Celtic Druids* in which he argued that the Druids, in his view a priestly caste from India, worshipped the cross and anticipated many other elements of christianity,

illustrating how christianity was a deliberate distortion of the true religion. Higgins was the one of the first scholars to point out the importance of phallus worship in ancient religions. *The Celtic Druids* was condemned as blasphemous by christians and excessively religious by deists. Like Stukeley, Higgins became a freemason to further his researches, although he refused to join the Royal Arch or the masonic Knights Templar for fear of being unable to reveal his discoveries in full.

Higgins's *magnum opus* was *Anacalypsis, An Attempt to Draw Aside the Veil of the Saitic Isis; or, an Inquiry into the Origin of Languages, Nations, and Religions*. It was not published until after Higgins's death and only the first volume was completed. *Anacalypsis* sought to prove that all religions were descended from an ancient elite order of monks. Higgins proposed that stonemasons were 'the first priests, or a branch from them, and as they were the people employed to provide everything requisite for honouring the Gods, the building of the Temples naturally fell into their hands, and thus priests and masons were identified'. This ancient religion was called Creestianity (*sic.*) and embraced Jews, Buddhists, Brahmins and Muslims. This universal religion was 'a sublime and beautiful system – the secret system of religion often alluded to by the christian fathers'. Freemasonry was a vestige of the ancient universal religion. Higgins added that 'I have stated enough to raise or justify what the Jesuits would call a probable opinion that the masonic ceremonies or secrets are

descendants of the Eleusinian mysteries..’ This for Higgins was the true secret of freemasonry, and in conversation with the radical Richard Carlile, Higgins claimed on this basis that he and the Duke of Sussex were the only two freemasons in England. Carlile was afterwards to popularise Higgins’s view of freemasonry in his own *Manual of Freemasonry*.

The influence of Godfrey Higgins is evident in many esoteric and New Age movements in Britain, but the most surprising effect of Higgin’s work was to give a renewed impetus to Christian apologists within English freemasonry, and particularly this man, the most celebrated English nineteenth-century writer on freemasonry, Rev. George Oliver. A Lincolnshire clergyman, Oliver was an energetic writer on freemasonry, religion and history, whose collected works fill 38 volumes. Oliver was excessively credulous, and was discredited as a historian of freemasonry by Robert Freke Gould, but his works are essential to understanding English freemasonry in the reign of Queen Victoria, as the recent biography of Oliver by Richard Sandbach has shown.

Oliver’s initial researches into freemasonry were a reaction to Godfrey Higgins. Indeed, he was urged to tone down his discussion of phallus worship in his first book, *The Antiquities of Freemasonry*. Oliver accepted

Higgins’s assumptions about the antiquity of religion, but sought to show that early religions were part of God’s purpose and paved the way for christianity, the highest expression of religious belief. He agreed with Higgins that freemasonry had existed from the earliest history of mankind, but saw it not as a remnant of an old religion but as the indispensable handmaid to the christian religion. In the words of Richard Sandbach, with the coming of Christ, ‘a new system of morality and conduct sprang from the old, and again embraces everything necessary for carrying out God’s will for mankind: this system does not provide or purport to provide the rules for religious celebration, or to dictate dogma, but concentrates on what man must do in his daily life on earth, how he must behave – a handmaid in fact to religion. Freemasonry is exactly that, and is the embodiment of that system’.

Thus, for Oliver freemasonry was a complement to christianity, and could only be fully appreciated by christians. In his own words, ‘The entire system of masonry is contained in the Holy Scriptures. The Old Testament presents us with its history and legend, its types and symbols; and the New Testament with its morality, and the explanation of these allegorical references which were a sealed book until the appearance of the Messiah upon earth, and the revelation of its gospel’. In Oliver’s view, while freemasonry did not exclude non-christians, they could never fully appreciate it. ‘I presume not to say that masonry is exclusively

christian... I only contend... that being a system of ethics and inculcating the morality of every christian religion under the sun, it is more particularly adapted to the Christian religion, because Christian ethics approach nearest to the standard of absolute perfection; and because the genius of masonry can assimilate with no other religion as completely as christianity’.

Oliver’s teachings, constantly reiterated by masonic chaplains and popularised by masonic periodicals such as *The Freemason*, had an enormous impact on Victorian freemasonry. Oliver observed that there were two factions in English freemasonry, one more conservative and wishing to keep freemasonry more closed, and the other explicitly christian, outward-looking and keen to evangelise for freemasonry. Oliver became the sage of the christian party, which was led by the radical doctor Robert Crucefix. Crucefix urged Grand Lodge to be more active on social issues, proposing resolutions against slavery and campaigning for a home for elderly impoverished freemasons. He started the first major English masonic periodical, *The Freemason’s Quarterly Review*. Crucefix was involved in a running battle with the conservative English masonic hierarchy, and Oliver was caught up in this, being dismissed from his Provincial office in Lincolnshire. Crucefix and Oliver actively promoted the christian higher degrees in England. The policy of using the masonic press and the higher degrees to christianise the craft in England continued to be pursued in England after the death of

Crucefix and Oliver by other figures such as Rev. Robert Wentworth Little, the first editor of *The Freemason*.

I would now like to show another short newsreel clip, this time of the dedication and launch at Peterhead in Scotland in 1922 of the lifeboat *The Duke of Connaught* presented by the United Grand Lodge of England to the Royal National Lifeboat Institution.

Film of launch of the lifeboat ‘The Duke of Connaught’.
A low resolution copy can be downloaded at:

http://www.britishpathe.com/product_display.cfm?searchfilm=freemasons+lifeboat

The launch was marked by a parade of freemasons from north-east Scotland, who were joined by local organisations ranging from the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides to the Fife and Drum Band of the local fishermen. The United Grand Lodge of England was represented by the Duke of Atholl, and the boat was accepted on behalf of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution by Sir Woodburn Kirby, himself a freemason.

The Royal National Lifeboat Institution was founded in 1824 to provide lifesaving services on the British coast, and remains one of the most popular British charities, taking pride in providing this essential service without any state aid. Lifeboats were one of the most popular

objects of nineteenth-century charity, with towns and social organisations competing to fund new boats. Although friendly societies such as the Oddfellows and the Foresters paid for new boats, freemasons were slow in rallying to the cause. *The Freemason's Magazine* began a campaign for a masonic lifeboat in 1868, but money was slow in coming in. Although two lifeboats were purchased with money collected from freemasons in 1871, the major impetus for masonic involvement with the lifeboat movement came in 1878, when two lifeboats were presented by United Grand Lodge itself. Since that time, English freemasonry has been staunch in its support of the lifeboats, a fact of which English freemasons are very proud. However, most freemasons are unaware that the origins of the masonic lifeboats lay in a further dispute about freemasonry and christianity, in which one of the most exotic figures of Victorian freemasonry, John Baxter Langley, played a central part.

Langley was a radical journalist in Manchester and Newcastle in the 1840s. He is best known for his support of the chartist revolutionary Ernest Jones in producing the radical publication *The People's Paper*. Langley was one of the prime movers of the Reform League, which campaigned for an extension of the right to vote. Langley was deeply interested in social questions, supporting Charles Bradlaugh and Annie Besant when they were prosecuted for advocating birth control and assisting Josephine Butler's unpopular campaign to reform the laws governing prostitution. Langley was chairman of a

company to build better homes for the working classes, and the great catastrophe of his life was a conviction for fraud as a result of his lax management of the company. Langley's father had wanted him to be an Anglican clergyman, but Langley rebelled against the established church, and became a unitarian. He campaigned against the restrictive character of the Victorian Sunday, believing that workers should be able to attend educational events. He established a series of Sunday lectures, which allowed working people a chance to hear speakers on such controversial subjects as the theory of evolution. Langley was also an enthusiastic freemason. He proposed that a masonic hall should be erected at the heart of the working class estate his company was building in south London.

In 1876, United Grand Lodge proposed that a charitable donation should be made from its funds as a thank-offering for the safe return of the Prince of Wales from a visit to India. It was suggested that the money should be used to repair the fabric of the cathedrals of St Paul's and St Albans. This sparked off a heated debate as to the propriety of using Grand Lodge funds for the maintenance of christian churches. Langley took a leading part in this. At one point, he caused uproar by claiming in a letter to *The Freemason* that the carvings on medieval cathedrals were remnants of phallus worship. In the subsequent correspondence, the name of Godfrey Higgins inevitably appeared. Following a debate in Grand Lodge, the matter was referred to a committee,

of which Langley was a member. The committee decided that a donation to a secular charity was more appropriate, and recommended the purchase of lifeboats.

This debate illustrates the extent to which English freemasonry in the nineteenth century was split between a christianising party and a more conservative wing, composed of very disparate elements. The matter of the use of masonic funds to support the maintenance of cathedrals was to emerge again in 1895, when it was proposed that freemasons should give up one dinner a year to help pay for the completion of the decoration of St Paul's Cathedral. While Grand lodge funds were not used to provide assistance for church buildings, at a local level many Provincial Grand Lodges made donations to assist cathedrals and churches, and most English cathedrals contain testimony to financial assistance provided by local freemasons.

In 1933, the *East Anglian Daily* carried a report of a masonic service held by the Provincial Grand Lodge of Essex at Chelmsford Cathedral. The report devotes considerable space to the sermon delivered at the service. Taking his text from St Paul, the preacher declared that 'The first great Masonic certainty was belief in God, the architect and ruler of the universe, and the father of all mankind.' The second great certainty, in the preacher's view, was that all things worked together for good. He

went on to discuss immortality, and suggested that the most enduring lesson of human history was that the grave was not the end. 'Immortality cannot be proved on scientific lines. Our certainty of immortality is based upon the moral certainty of God. We believe in God, a moral God, and immortality is the outcome of that great certainty. If the grave is the end of all things, life is a grim satire, a grim joke, and the author of that grim joke is God. Never think God has abdicated his throne. The grave is not the last word; there are other spheres of service.'

The preacher was another remarkable but now forgotten figure of English freemasonry, the Rev. Sir Herbert Dunnico. Born in Wales, Dunnico started work in a factory at the age of ten but, studying in his spare time, eventually managed to win a scholarship to University College Nottingham and was ordained as a baptist minister in Warrington and Liverpool, becoming president of the Liverpool Free Church Council. He was a committed socialist and in 1922 he was elected as Labour M.P. for Consett. From 1929 to 1931 he was Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee of the House of Commons, and he served as Deputy Speaker. As a freemason, Dunnico was instrumental in the formation of one of the most unusual lodges in the history of English freemasonry, the New Welcome Lodge No. 5139. This was consecrated in 1929, shortly before the formation of the first majority Labour government, at the suggestion of the then Prince of

Wales, afterwards Edward VIII. The Prince was concerned that socialists were being blackballed by masonic lodges in London and alarmed by the antagonism of the British left towards freemasonry. The New Welcome Lodge was intended specifically for Labour M.P.s and for employees of trade unions and the Labour party. It was intended to form a link between freemasonry and the new ruling party. Among the many Labour M.P.s which the lodge recruited were the Party's Deputy Leader Arthur Greenwood and its Secretary Scott Lindsay, but the formation of the National Government made it difficult to sustain the lodge from the rump of the Parliamentary Labour Party. From 1934, New Welcome became a lodge for all men working in the Palace of Westminster. Dunnico was Master of the New Welcome Lodge in 1931, when he helped avert a crisis in English freemasonry caused by a proposed rise in subscriptions to finance the building of a new Freemasons' Hall in London as a masonic peace memorial. This was the time when the depression had badly affected northern England, and the increase in subscription caused outrage among northern Freemasons. Dunnico rescued the situation with a masterly speech at a special meeting of Grand Lodge at the Royal Albert Hall.

Dunnico's career illustrates how, even for socialist freemasons in England, the religious aspects of freemasonry have been of paramount importance. The relationship between the non-conformist churches and freemasonry has generally been a suspicious one. When

in 1895 a masonic service was organised at a non-conformist chapel in London, it was said to have been the first such service held on non-conformist premises and the thought that such a service could be held created astonishment. Non-conformists seem only to have become involved in freemasonry in any significant numbers after this date. Dunnico seems to have played a part in allaying non-conformist suspicions of freemasonry. Following his speech at the Royal Albert Hall, Dunnico became a popular speaker among English freemasons. While his talks show greater consciousness of social issues and the changing world situation than the writings of George Oliver, they are still very much in his tradition and in the tradition established by the battalions of Victorian masonic preachers.

A characteristic address by Dunnico was 'Masonry, A Sacred Heritage', delivered at the consecration of the John Evelyn Lodge No. 5518 in 1935. Dunnico described how fifty years previously countries could live independently but, in the world of the 1930s, which was shrinking to the size of a village, it was necessary to live in friendly brotherly cooperation, or life would become a perpetual hell. The masonic witness he declared was of greater importance than ever. It affirms that life is not meaningless and haphazard, but behind it is the guiding purpose of a Great Architect whose name is God, the father of all men. 'We affirm that because of our belief in the Fatherhood of God, the logical outcome is Brotherhood.'

‘Brotherhood to us is no mere sentiment, no mere fond hope or pious aspiration, but an eternal law embedded in the very fabric of the Universe, which the world must obey or perish. Until men are willing to obey this law, economists may devise new systems, one set of politicians may replace another, and the Churches may utter their varying shibboleths, but the New Heaven and the New Earth, the New Jerusalem, will tarry. Our task is not to make Masonry fit in with the world, but to make the world fit in with Masonry by enthroning the spirit of Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth in all the relations of life. The world cannot be held together by any outward pressure, but only by the growth of that inner spirit enshrined in the very soul of Masonry.

Standing here today we plight our faith in God, in the divinity of man, in the belief that love is the only cement that can hold the world together. We renew our allegiance to our home, our country, our King and our God. We pledge ourselves to the defence of Liberty, the practice of Justice, and the spread of brotherly love, that goodness may increase and pity walk the common way of life. Standing here we prophesy that the day will come when there shall be one language, and that language Truth, one law, and that law love, one task, that task service to God and man’.

Did Dunnico here locate the soul of British freemasonry? I believe so – the essence of British freemasonry lies in a

brotherhood, but one which stems from a consciousness of God and which is rooted in a loyalty to the country and its monarchy. And of course in a nation whose views of God, the monarchy and the nature of patriotism have shifted fundamentally in the past fifty years, it is hardly surprising that the soul of British freemasonry is one which has of late been troubled, but that is another lecture. Here let me conclude with some final short newsreel clips of those public processions and ceremonies which seem to me to encapsulate the historic spirit of British freemasonry and in particular its religious character. the first shows the unveiling of a memorial window in Sheffield Cathedral. Particularly noticeable is the clerical character of the procession. You will see one clergyman wearing masonic regalia above his clerical robes, and the bible, as the Volume of the Sacred Law, carried by another clergyman.

Film of dedication of memorial window in Sheffield Cathedral, with masonic procession. A low resolution preview can be downloaded at:

http://www.britishpathe.com/product_display.cfm?search_film=masonic+sheffield

Finally, here is the ceremony for the laying of the foundation stone of a hospital in Sussex in 1933. Not only is the religious character of the ceremony, with its references to the Anglican liturgy very evident, but a christian hymn is sung during the ceremony.

Film of laying of foundation stone of Royal Sussex Hospital in Brighton by PGM for Sussex. A low resolution preview can be downloaded at:

http://www.britishpathe.com/product_display.cfm?searchfilm=freemasons+brighton

Brother Irving: Sir Henry Irving and Freemasonry

Article for 'First Knight', the newsletter of the Henry Irving Society, November 2003

Among the 'big red-letter days' for Charles Pooter, the Holloway city clerk whose daily life is recorded in George and Weedon Grossmith's *Diary of a Nobody*, was a ball at the Mansion House. Imagining that he and his wife would be mixing with the most elevated society, Pooter was astonished to meet at the Mansion House his local ironmonger, Farmerson. Pooter was even more amazed when 'one of the sheriffs, in full Court costume, slapped Farmerson on the back and hailed him as an old friend, and asked him to dine with him at his lodge'. Pooter could not believe his eyes: 'To think that a man who mends our scraper should know any member of the aristocracy'. Pooter failed to grasp that Farmerson was a freemason. He bought the *Blackfriars Bi-weekly News* to read the report of the ball: 'Disappointed to find our names omitted, though Farmerson's is in plainly enough with M.L.L. after it, whatever it may mean.' M.L.L. is not a standard masonic abbreviation, but presumably meant that Farmerson was the master of a lodge.

George Grossmith was himself a freemason,²³³ and uses Pooter's ignorance of freemasonry to emphasise the

²³³ He acted as steward in raising money for the Royal Masonic Benevolent Institution.

shallowness of Pooter's social pretensions and his outmoded lower middle-class outlook. For Grossmith, freemasonry broke down fusty social distinctions and gave social prestige. A similar outlook is apparent in another Victorian comic classic which also began life in the pages of *Punch*, *Mrs Caudle's Curtain Lectures* by Douglas Jerrold, who was also a freemason.²³⁴ The *Curtain Lectures* are bedtime monologues directed at Job Caudle, the quintessential hen-pecked husband, by his petty-minded and obsessive wife. Mr Caudle's initiation as a freemason provokes the customary torrent from his wife: 'It isn't the secret I care about: it's the slight, Mr Caudle; it's the studied insult that a man pays to his wife, when he thinks of going through the world keeping something to himself which he won't let her know ... a woman ought to be allowed a divorce when a man becomes a mason: when he's got a sort of corner-cupboard in his heart – a secret place in his mind – that his poor wife isn't allowed to rummage'. Again, for Jerrold, the joke is not Mr Caudle going through an absurd ceremony, but rather Mrs Caudle's curiosity about an event which was commonplace for the Victorian middle-class male, and which offered Caudle the prospect of some quiet evenings out.

²³⁴ *The Freemasons Magazine and Monthly Mirror* 3 (1857), pp. 604-5. Jerrold was initiated in the Bank of England Lodge No. 329 in November 1831, and continued a member until June 1836. He joined the Lodge of Concord No. 49 in March 1838 and apparently left it in December 1844.

This is the milieu in which we should interpret Sir Henry Irving's career as a freemason. The experiences of both Charles Pooter and Job Caudle indicate how Victorian perceptions of freemasonry were very different to modern ones. One of the engines behind the development of Victorian middle class culture was the multiplicity of clubs and societies in both London and the provinces. One of the largest and most influential of these was freemasonry. Mainstream craft freemasonry in England was governed by the United Grand Lodge, a descendant of the first Grand Lodge established in London in 1717. Victoria's reign saw an astonishing boom in freemasonry. In 1840, there were just over a hundred lodges in London and 340 in the provinces. By 1894, the number of London lodges alone had increased to 382, and the provincial lodges showed a similarly large increase. There were also English masonic lodges throughout the Empire, and by 1894 there were altogether 2543 lodges on the register of United Grand Lodge.²³⁵

The growing social prestige of freemasonry in the second half of the nineteenth century was expressed in many ways. The imposing headquarters of English freemasonry

²³⁵ Figures based on John Lane, *Masonic Records 1717-1894* (London: United Grand Lodge, 1895), and S. Pope, 'The Development of Freemasonry in England and Wales', *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum* 68 (1956), pp. 129-31.

at Freemasons' Hall in Great Queen Street in London was rebuilt and extended in 1864, and lodges in provincial cities also built opulent masonic halls. Many members of the aristocracy held office under United Grand Lodge, and United Grand Lodge renewed the connection with royalty established by such earlier Grand Masters as George IV and his brother the Duke of Sussex. Albert Edward, Prince of Wales, was initiated as a freemason in Stockholm by the King of Sweden in 1868. On the resignation in 1874 of the Marquess of Ripon as Grand Master following his conversion to Roman Catholicism, the Prince of Wales became Grand Master, serving until his accession to the throne. The Prince's initiation encouraged some of his brothers to follow suit. Arthur, Duke of Connaught, was initiated by the Prince of Wales in 1874 while he was master of the Prince of Wales's Lodge No. 259, and Leopold, Duke of Albany, became a freemason in the same year in the Apollo University Lodge No. 357 at Oxford.²³⁶

The involvement of the Prince of Wales and other members of the royal family in freemasonry was no secret. Freemasons all over the country frequently performed public ceremonies for the laying of foundation stones such as churches, theatres and hospitals; in 1877, for example, Lord Leigh as Provincial Grand Master of Warwickshire laid the foundation stone of the

²³⁶ *Grand Lodge 1717-1967* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 277; *The Freemason*, 15 September 1877, p. 377.

Shakespeare Memorial Theatre at Stratford-upon-Avon with masonic honours.²³⁷ In these ceremonies, freemasons paraded publicly in their regalia. The Prince of Wales appeared in public in his masonic regalia when he laid, *inter alia*, the foundation stones of Truro Cathedral in 1880 and the York Institute in 1883.²³⁸ These ceremonies were reported with great enthusiasm by the growing number of masonic periodicals and newspapers. A weekly newspaper, *The Freemason*, was begun in 1869, and was joined by others such as *The Freemason's Chronicle*, launched in 1875. These masonic newspapers, which carried detailed reports of lodge meetings and articles on prominent figures in freemasonry, were sold on public news stands. Victorian freemasonry was not so much a secret society but more a society with secrets. Membership itself was not secret, although, in common with other Victorian clubs, freemasonry tended to regard membership as a private matter. The secret consisted rather in the details of the ritual – the information which Mrs Caudle was so anxious to prise from her husband.

Biographies of Victorian worthies frequently list their masonic honours with other social attainments, and in

²³⁷ The foundation stone of the present theatre at Stratford was also laid with masonic honours by the Pro Grand Master Lord Amptill in 1929 in a ceremony which was broadcast on the BBC: *The Freemason*, 6 July 1929, pp. 13, 16.

²³⁸ *The Freemason*, 29 May 1880, pp. 238-41; 21 July 1883, pp. 370-2.

reporting details of Sir Henry Irving's involvement with freemasonry in his *Life of Irving*, Austin Brereton was following these precedents in order to emphasise Irving's respectability.²³⁹ The information given by Brereton is confirmed by the register of membership held by the United Grand Lodge of England and available for consultation at the Library and Museum of Freemasonry. There are three degrees in craft freemasonry: entered apprentice; fellow craft; and master mason. Irving was initiated and became an entered apprentice in the Jerusalem Lodge No. 197, which met at Freemasons' Hall in London, on 27 April 1877. Irving was initiated by the master of the lodge, the organist Sir William Cusins. However, it was some years before Irving passed to the next degree of fellow craft. This occurred at a meeting of the Jerusalem Lodge on 24 November 1882. Irving was finally raised to the status of master mason on 12 January 1883. He continued to subscribe to the Jerusalem Lodge for the rest of his life. Irving had been a member of the Savage Club since 1871,²⁴⁰ and when it was proposed in 1887 that a masonic lodge should be formed to be connected with the club and dining on its premises, Irving was among those who signed the petition for the lodge and was its first treasurer. Although Irving served as treasurer for just one year, he continued as a member of the Savage Club Lodge No. 2190 until his death. In

1893, Irving also joined the St Martin's Lodge No. 2455, being elected an honorary member of the lodge in 1904. Irving was a supporter of masonic charities, making regular donations to the two masonic schools and to the Royal Masonic Benevolent Institution.

All this may seem to suggest that Irving was an enthusiastic freemason, but in fact, while he warmly supported freemasonry, he never took a very active part in it. He never served as master of a lodge and never attended Grand Lodge, the parliament of English freemasonry. He never joined the Royal Arch, an order described as the completion of freemasonry and which United Grand Lodge encouraged its members to join. Neither was he involved in any of the additional degrees which, although administered separately and not formally recognised by United Grand Lodge, were open only to master masons and were very popular in the late nineteenth century. It would be wrong to suggest that Irving did not value his membership of freemasonry – there is every indication that he did – but he did not undertake the sorts of offices or achieve the honours which most enthusiastic English freemasons of the period took for granted. This was presumably because Irving had little spare time to devote to his freemasonry. In this Irving contrasts with other leading freemasons in the theatrical world at that time, such as Edward Terry and Augustus Harris, who were ardent in their promotion of freemasonry and held many different offices.

²³⁹ Austin Brereton, *The Life of Henry Irving* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1908), 1, p. 234.

²⁴⁰ Brereton, op. cit., 2, p. 161; Watson, op. cit., p. 54.

The difficulty which Irving found in pursuing freemasonry is evident from the long gap between his initiation and his passing to fellow craft. Many men initiated into freemasonry never proceed to the next degree, thus effectively becoming lapsed masons. This happened for example with the artist and cartoonist Phil May, who was initiated in the Savage Club Lodge in 1895, but never pursued his masonic career further.²⁴¹ There could be many reasons for failure to proceed to the fellow craft degree: lack of time to learn the ritual, feeling socially ill at ease with the lodge, or distaste for the ritual. The Jerusalem Lodge in which Irving had been initiated was one of London's oldest and most prestigious. It had been founded in 1771 and was one of the nineteen 'red apron' lodges which were entitled to nominate one of their members as Grand Steward. Jerusalem Lodge was the first private masonic lodge in England which the Prince of Wales visited after becoming a mason. The membership of the lodge was dominated by civil engineers and architects, including Sir Charles Hutton Gregory, President of the Institution of Civil Engineers, Charles Barry, the eldest son of the architect of the Palace of Westminster and a distinguished architect in his own right, John Whichcord, President of the Royal Institution of British Architects, and the general managers of the Midland

²⁴¹ John Hargreaves, *Savage Club Lodge Centenary Meeting 1887-1987: One Hundredth Anniversary* (London, 1987), p. 8

Railway and the London and North Western Railway.²⁴² However, the membership was not limited to these professions; the actor and singer John Pritt Harley had been initiated in the lodge in 1818.²⁴³ In accepting an invitation to join this lodge, Irving must have been conscious of the social prestige it conferred, but as Irving's celebrity increased, it must have been embarrassing for the lodge that Irving had not proceeded to the next degree.

The initiative in encouraging Irving to take the next step in freemasonry seems to have been a royal one. On 2 December 1882, *The Freemason* carried the following report:

'Jerusalem Lodge No. 197.

This lodge met on Friday week, at Freemasons' Hall, and was graced by the presence of HRH the Duke of Albany, Past Grand Senior Warden of England and Provincial Grand Master of Oxfordshire. Dr Arnold Royle was in attendance on his Royal Highness. The lodge was presided over by Bro. E. Letchworth, Worshipful Master [who afterwards became Grand Secretary] ...

²⁴² Alan Moncrieff, *Jerusalem Lodge No. 197 History and Record* (London, 1960).

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 131. Harley was described as a 'comedian' in the records of the lodge, and the same epithet was used for Irving. P. G. Wodehouse was later a member of this lodge.

The principal business of the evening was the ceremony of passing Bro. John Henry Brodribb Irving, the celebrated actor, to the second or Fellow Craft degree. Bro. Irving, although having, it is stated, been a freemason for some years, has not hitherto prosecuted the science, but has remained in the initiative stage of an entered apprentice...²⁴⁴

The report went on to list the many high-ranking freemasons who were present on this occasion. The reason why Irving had failed previously to pursue his freemasonry is made evident by the conclusion of the report which notes that ‘The brethren subsequently dined together, but his Royal Highness left previously, as did Bro. Irving in consequence of his professional engagements’.

The Savage Club had been founded in 1857 by a ‘little band of authors, journalists and artists’ to provide an informal but private venue for members of London’s Bohemia.²⁴⁵ The origins of the club’s name are mysterious; possibly it was an allusion to Richard Savage, but the club’s literature was permeated by punning references to American Indians and Aborigines. Irving became a member in 1871. In 1882, the Prince of Wales became an honorary member of the club and, appreciating its informal atmosphere, took a great

interest in the affairs of the club.²⁴⁶ The Prince suggested that a good addition to the facilities at the club would be a masonic lodge. on 3 December 1886, Thomas Catling, the editor of *Lloyd’s News*, wrote to the Grand Secretary of United Grand Lodge as follows:

‘A long cherished idea on the part of many members of the Savage Club has at length received an amount of support which justifies the accompanying application to the Most Worshipful Grand Master for a warrant for a new lodge. The Savage Club, which is “instituted for the association of gentlemen connected professionally with literature, art, the drama, or science”, now consists of 400 members, fully one-fourth of whom are masons, though many it is found are not at the present time subscribing members. From the interest evinced in the proposal there is a confident belief that if the new lodge is founded it will draw the majority of the masons in the club more closely together, and at the same time be the means of adding to the strength and prosperity of the craft by increasing its members. The petitioners are all “Savages”, but they do not bind themselves to admit none save their own members, though it will be their aim and endeavour to keep as close as possible to the principles which govern the elections to the Savage Club.’²⁴⁷

²⁴⁴ *The Freemason*, 2 December 1882, p. 673.

²⁴⁵ Aaron Watson, *The Savage Club* (London: Fisher Unwin, 1907).

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 167-80.

²⁴⁷ Library and Museum of Freemasonry, petitions.

Enclosed with the letter was a formal petition to the Grand Master for the formation of the new lodge. The signatories were Sir Francis Wyatt Truscott, President of the Society of Artists, who was to be first master of the new lodge, Sir John Somers Vine, the club's secretary, who was to be the first senior warden, Lord Dunraven (Viscount Adair), then Provincial Grand Master of Oxfordshire, Catling, W. E. Chapman, Thomas Burnside and Archibald Neill, all described as journalists, another literary gentleman, John Paige, John Maclean, an actor, Raymond Tucker, an artist, and Irving. Evidently Catling had been busy lobbying members of the Savage Club who were masons to assemble as imposing group of petitioners as possible. He had asked Lord Dunraven not only to support the petition but to agree if possible to take office in the new lodge. Dunraven had agreed to sign the petition, but could not take office. Irving was not sufficiently experienced as a mason to take one of the more senior offices in the lodge, but agreed to act as treasurer of the new lodge.

The Savage Club Lodge was consecrated at Freemasons' Hall on 18 January 1887, and Irving was invested as Treasurer of the new lodge. The lengthy report of the consecration in *The Freemason* refers to Irving's presence but does not mention any speech by him.²⁴⁸ The Savage Club Lodge was enormously successful. In its first year, eleven meetings were held, and in the

²⁴⁸ *The Freemason*, 22 January 1887, pp. 38-9.

following year another ten. By the end of 1890, membership of the lodge had risen to 124.²⁴⁹ Many new masons had been initiated in the lodge and then passed through the various degrees in lengthy and elaborate rituals, and it was the working of these rituals which accounted for the large number of meetings. The club invited the Prince of Wales to become an honorary member,²⁵⁰ but although he refused this honour, he presented to the club a gavel for use in lodge meetings which had been used by the Queen when laying the foundation stone of the Imperial Institute at South Kensington.²⁵¹ Irving must have found the responsibilities of the Treasurership of this enthusiastic young lodge very burdensome, and at the earliest opportunity, after just a year, he gave up this office in favour of his fellow actor Edward Terry.²⁵²

²⁴⁹ *The Freemason*, 11 February 1888, pp. 77-8.

²⁵⁰ Library and Museum of Freemasonry, lodge file for Savage Club Lodge.

²⁵¹ Hargreaves, op. cit., p. 7.

²⁵² Unfortunately, all the accounts of the Savage Club lodge were lost when the Treasurer's Chambers at 1, King's Bench Walk, were destroyed by fire during an enemy raid on 12 May 1941: Library and Museum of Freemasonry, lodge file for Savage Club lodge. Subsequent members of this lodge included the actors Brandon Thomas, Robert Atkins and Arnold Ridley (of 'Dad's Army' fame), the artists Sir William Hutchinson and James Gunn, the entertainer Richard Winthrop ('Bud Flanagan'), the novelist Alex Waugh and the television cook Phillip Harben: Hargreaves, op. cit.

Edward Terry's enthusiasm as a freemason forms a marked contrast to Irving. Terry was the Director of Ceremonies of the Savage Club Lodge, marshalling its ceremonies with great enthusiasm and panache. The report of the installation meeting of the lodge's new master in 1888 describes how Terry, 'ablaze with jewels', led an imposing procession of high-ranking Grand Officers.²⁵³ Terry also led the way in the entertainments at the banquet which followed the meeting, before rushing off to perform on the stage. In 1891, Terry was one of the prime movers behind the establishment of a Royal Arch Chapter attached to the Savage Club Lodge, and served as the First Zerubbabel, a principal officer of the chapter. Terry eventually achieved national office as Grand Treasurer. Terry's enormous enthusiasm for freemasonry is evident from the resume of his masonic career published in *The Freemason* following his death in 1912.²⁵⁴

'His first appearance in London was at the Surrey Theatre, in 1867, but his great success came when he first appeared in Belfast. In 1868 he appeared at the Lyceum Theatre, and in the same year was initiated into Masonry in the Royal Union Lodge, No. 382, at Uxbridge. He became Master of the Asaph Lodge, No. 1319, in 1877, and, as a member of the St. Alban's Lodge, No. 29, of which he was a past Master,

²⁵³ *The Freemason*, 11 February 1888, pp. 77-8.

²⁵⁴ *The Freemason*, 6 April 1912, p. 656.

represented the Lodge on the Board of Grand Stewards for 1885. He was a founder of the Savage Club Lodge, No. 2190 [*This was not actually the case; the founders of the Savage Club Lodge are noted above, Terry joining the lodge in 1887*], and succeeded Bro. Henry Irving as Treasurer in 1888. He was also founder and First Master of the Edward Terry Lodge, No. 2722. In 1889 he was nominated for the Grand Treasurer of England, and a vigorous contest was waged, his opponent being the late Bro. George Everett. the election resulted in a victory for Bro. Terry, by 841 votes to 617. He was P.Z. of the Asaph Chapter; perfected in the Rose Croix, 18°, in the A. and A. Rite, being a Member of the Palestine Chapter, No. 29. For some years he was a member of the Board of General Purposes, and served numerous Stewardships for the Charities, qualifying as a Patron for each of the three Institutions'.

By contrast, Irving seems not to have attended meetings of the Savage Club Lodge very often. Very characteristic is the note he sent on the installation of Thomas Catling as Master in 1889: 'Dear Bro. Catling, It would have been a delight to me to be present at the installation today, did not the exacting character of my present work compel me to forgo a pleasure of such a kind...' ²⁵⁵ The contrast between Irving's involvement in freemasonry and that of Edward Terry is evident from the theatrical column of *The Freemason*. While news about Terry's

²⁵⁵ *The Freemason*, 9 February 1889, p. 75.

activities appeared almost weekly in *The Freemason*, and suggests that Terry was assiduously forwarding information to George Kenning, the newspaper's publisher, reports about 'Bro. Henry Irving' appeared much less frequently, and seem to have been taken from the general newspapers.²⁵⁶ Nevertheless, Irving's name and prestige could still be useful. It was invoked by the Scribe Ezra (Secretary) of the Savage Club Lodge Chapter when trying to straighten out a confusion over the use of a stage name on a masonic certificate: 'With respect to Bro. Rosenthal, he is in the same position as Mr Irving and 99/100ths of the professional members of the order. His name is Metcalfe, but upon adopting the stage as a profesion (some 40 years ago) he called himself 'Rosenthal', and has been known ever since as 'Rosenthal', and I presume will continue to be so as long as he lives.'²⁵⁷

Another person whose name frequently appeared in the theatrical column of *The Freemason* and whose masonic career again contrasts with that of Irving was Augustus Harris, the manager of the Drury Lane Theatre.²⁵⁸ Harris was initiated as a freemason in Edinburgh at a special meeting of the St Clare Lodge on 6 March 1875, passing

²⁵⁶ For example, *The Freemason*, 30 June 1888, p. 344; 7 July 1888, p. 357;

²⁵⁷ Library and Museum of Freemasonry, chapter returns, Savage Club Chapter (6 July 1894).

²⁵⁸ On Harris and the Drury Lane Lodge, see A. M. Broadley, *The Craft, The Drama and Drury Lane* (London, 1887).

through all three degrees in a single night. This was shortly before he set out on a disastrous concert tour of Norway, and the kindness shown to him and his destitute company by Norwegian freemasons confirmed him in his strong attachment to freemasonry. In the autumn of 1885, Harris conceived the idea of forming a lodge which would meet in a specially furnished masonic temple within the Drury Lane Theatre itself. The lodge was consecrated on 25 January 1886 as Drury Lane Lodge No. 2127. Among the founders were Lord Londesborough, Senior Grand Warden of United Grand Lodge, who was the first master, Sir John Gorst, the Solicitor General, General (then Colonel) Kitchener, Admiral Sir Edward Inglefield, the Arctic explorer, and J. S. Fleming, the Treasurer at Drury Lane, as well as actors and authors such as Henry Neville, Charles Warner, Thomas Thorne and J. H. Clynds. Among those who joined the lodge were Charles Wyndham, Lord Alfred Paget, James Fernandez, Lionel Brough, Harry Nicholls and Charles Harris, the manager of the Gaiety Theatre. In March 1887, *The Freemason* reported that 'Bro. Beerbohm Tree was initiated into the mysteries of the craft at the last meeting of the Drury Lane Lodge'.²⁵⁹ Harris himself eventually became Grand Treasurer of United Grand Lodge. The Drury Lane lodge still meets in the temple room which Harris so sumptuously fitted out in the Theatre Royal.

²⁵⁹ *The Freemason*, 26 March 1887, p. 176.

It is telling that Irving never joined the Drury Lane Lodge. The third lodge which he joined, St Martin's Lodge No. 2455, was founded in 1893. One of the largest sources of recruits for freemasonry at the end of the nineteenth century were professional officers attached to the vestries, school boards and councils. This led to the establishment in London of a number of lodges closely associated with local government. The St Martin's Lodge was closely connected with the Vestry of St Martin in the Fields. The Founding Master declared at the consecration of the lodge reported 'that our venerable Vicar, The Rev. Mr Kitto, was one of the first to undertake to be an initiate, and among the founders we comprise the two Churchwardens, and, with one exception, the whole of the petitioning members are either members of the Vestry, Board of Overseers, or Guardians. Practically the whole of the parochial part of the parish are taking an interest in the lodge...' ²⁶⁰ As one of the celebrities most closely associated with this area of London, Irving would naturally have welcomed and encouraged the establishment of this lodge, but again did not take a very active part in it. Indeed, the reports on Irving's masonic career in the masonic press at his death generally do not mention his membership of this lodge.

Irving supported freemasonry, and thought that it did good, but the pattern of his masonic career makes it clear that he never had the time to become an active freemason

²⁶⁰ *The Freemason*, 28 January 1893, p. 39.

in the way that Terry or Harris did. This makes the argument by John Pick and Robert Protherough in *First Knight* that Irving was in some way involved in masonic concealment of the true identity of Jack the Ripper very unlikely. Irving was simply too far detached from the counsels of English freemasonry to have taken the role that Pick and Protherough ascribe to him. Moreover, the theory, first put forward by Stephen Knight, that the Ripper killings were undertaken by freemasons in order to keep secret the clandestine marriage of Prince Albert Victor, has now been discredited. A recent authoritative discussion in *History Today* of the various theories on the Ripper killings concluded that: 'The "Masonic link" is of like ilk to the "Popish Plot" and the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and belongs in the same dustbin'. ²⁶¹ Knight's theory depended on the assumption that such figures as the Marquess of Salisbury, Sir William Gull and Sir Robert Anderson were freemasons, but in fact none of these gentlemen were. ²⁶² Above all, even on

²⁶¹ William D. Rubinstein, 'The Hunt for Jack the Ripper', *History Today* 50.5 (May 2000), p. 14. Knight quotes extensively from the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.

²⁶² Stephen Knight, *Jack the Ripper: The Final Solution* (London: Harrap, 1984). An annotation by John Hamill, former Librarian and Curator of United Grand Lodge, on the copy of Knight's book in the Library and Museum of Freemasonry reads: 'This volume is to be treated with caution. The Marquess of Salisbury, Sir William Gull and Sir Robert Anderson were *not* freemasons. The masonic information has been largely culled from "exposures". In particular, the Royal Arch "oath" has been taken from an American early nineteenth century exposure and has never applied in England'.

Knight's own analysis, Irving could never have been linked with the alleged cover-up, since Knight connects this with the Royal Arch, and, as has been seen, Irving was never a member of this masonic order.

Irving's distant relationship with freemasonry is apparent in the notices of his death which appeared in the masonic press in 1905. Here is the report from *The Freemason*:

'Probably to the younger generation of Masons, the fact of the connection with the Craft of the world's greatest tragedian – the late Sir Henry Irving – whose passing away has held spell-bound the English-speaking world during the past week, will be news. 'Tis not the province of the Masonic *raconteur* to descant on the qualities of that great genius, who has done so much to make happier and brighter the minds of the people; but it rejoices those who are left lamenting to remember that amidst the strenuousness of his exalted career the late Bro. Sir Henry Irving did not hesitate to take part, with many more of name and fame, in the spread of the principles and tenets of Freemasonry. Beloved as a Bohemian, as a friend of the distressed, a loving imitator of all that was highest and noblest in our nature, and the Masonic world will utter its *valé* over his grave.'²⁶³

It would be tempting to argue that Irving used freemasonry as part of his campaign to enhance the

social and cultural status of the actor. But Irving evidently only resumed his masonic career to become a fellow craft by royal request, at a time when he was already a national celebrity. Senior freemasons such as the Duke of Albany and Edward Letchworth realised that freemasonry would itself gain social lustre by securing the support of Irving, and encouraged him to proceed to the second and third degrees. Irving's active involvement in freemasonry was always, however, limited by 'the exacting character of my present work'.

The masonic press joined in the national mourning for Irving. The *Masonic Illustrated* carried a full-page portrait of him, while *The Freemason* carried the following memorial verse by Charles Forshaw, an amateur poet, *littérateur* and dentist from Bradford:²⁶⁴

'The Last Act
In Memoriam
Bro. Sir Henry Irving LL.D., Litt. D., Fellow of the
Royal Society of Literature

Draw down the curtain for the act is o'er –
The last great tragic act that comes to all;
And it is meet, though Nations wide deplore
That thus he answered to the Prompter's call!
The play is finished – a more perfect play
Was never staged on this terrestrial sphere;

²⁶³ *The Freemason*, 21 October 1905, p. 581.

²⁶⁴ *The Freemason*, 21 October 1905, p. 579.

The scene – unparalleled in realms of day,
In its completeness was without compeer!
Great is the drama of all Human Life-
Sorrow and laughter, sin, and shame and tears;
Trials and troubles, suffering and strife,
Hope, doubt and longing, certainty and fears;
We felt all these when by his potent mien
He showed them to us as they should be seen!’

Tales from Great Queen Street I: Travelling Masons

Extract from the Centre's website

One of the most important of the record classes in the archives of the United Grand Lodge of England at the Library and Museum of Freemasonry is the 'returns'. These mostly comprise lists of members sent by lodge secretaries to the Grand Secretary, but also include large quantities of correspondence about membership matters. Together with the Historical Correspondence, these letters are now the subject of a cataloguing project which forms part of the Access to Archives programme. Since the correspondence in the returns relates to membership, and it was necessary to establish the credentials of masons who moved to other countries, many of these letters throw interesting sidelights on travel and travelling. This is illustrated by the following series of letters to the Grand Secretary included in the returns of St George's Lodge in Chertsey, the oldest lodge in Surrey, at that time No. 486, and now No. 370.

St Georges Lodge 486

Swan Inn

Chertsey

Augt 26 1848

Dear Sir and Brother

A member of our Lodge who has just been initiated is

*about to proceed to Madeira and is most desirous of being past and raised previously. Our W[orshipful] M[aster] thinks a dispensation may be obtained for this purpose and has desired me to write to you on the subject. Will you do me the favor to say what steps we are to take, or can you take them for us without delay. The Brothers name is Champion Wetton of Chertsey. Your reply will oblige
Dear Sir and Brother
Your servant
S Bidwell*

An endorsement states that the letter was answered on 28 August, to the effect that no dispensation could be granted.

*St Georges Lodge 486
Swan Inn
Chertsey
Decr 13 1848*

*Dear Sir & Bror
Our brother Champion Wetton of whom I wrote to you some time ago as being about to proceed to Madeira has started on his voyage and wishes his Certificate sent out after him on the 17th inst. Will you be kind enough to have it prepared by Saturday morning and I will call for it.*

He was initiated Augt. 24 1848

*Passed October 6th
Raised Nov 3rd
His age is 25.*

*I am Dear Sir and Bro
Yours fraternally
S Bidwell
Secretary
St George's Lodge No. 486.*

*Swan Inn Chertsey
Apl. 16. 1852.*

*Dear Sir & Brother
Our Brother Champion Wetton who was initiated in this Lodge in Augt 1848, passed in October and raised in November in the same year & for whose certificate I paid you shortly afterwards. — This Certificate was burnt with all our brothers other effects at the Great Fire in San Francisco whither he had proceeded and he now wants another, being again about to proceed to South Australia.*

Will you be good enough to let me have it in a day or two, and if there be any charge for it, I will remit the amount.

*Yours sincerely,
Samuel Bidwell*

An endorsement on the letter notes that a duplicate certificate was issued on the same day as the receipt of the letter, 17 April.

Another letter describing the travels of a mason in North America at the beginning of the nineteenth century occurs in the returns from St David's Lodge in Milford Haven in Wales. John Grant was Secretary of this lodge in 1821. The Grand Secretary in London was unable to confirm that Brother Grant had ever been a mason. Brother Grant in a letter of 19 May 1821 explained that he had been initiated in Quebec, then had moved to Nova Scotia, so was unable to practice his masonry:

I also understand that I am not yet registered in the book of the Grand Lodge; Brother Ritchard (whose wife died on the 17th and a child of his about 3 or four years old a few days before) says he forwarded to you the money at the same time he mentioned mine and four other names to be registered.

In my said letter I mentioned my being initiated passed and raised and passed and presided in the chair of St Andrews Lodge No 2 Quebec but did not say in Canada and as I then could not lay my hand on my certificate could not give you the number on the Book of the Grand Lodge of England. Having since found that certificate I annex a copy of it (Quebec is in Canada) which I trust will remove further doubt.

I had resided in Quebec since the year 1781 and in November 1786 proceeded by land to Halifax Nova Scotia where I resided till August 1792 during which time there was not any freemason's lodge whatever nor did I meet with a freemason there. I was there Agent Victualler for His Majesty's Navy and at the same time acted part of that time Deputy Paymaster General to His Majesty's Forces and on my arrival in England obtained my Quietus from His Majesty's Exchequer which very few in similar situations obtain; witness the red book.

Another exotic example of a travelling mason is found in the returns for Humber Lodge No. 73 in Hull

Hull

Nov. 10th 1814

Most respected Sir and Brother

Have the pleasure to send you the undermentioned new made Brother's name for registering and certificate made in our Lodge No. 73 and Raised to the sublime degree of a Master Mason on the 9th inst., viz:

Charles Rasewig Aged 22 years, officer, native of St Petersburg, in Russia. You will please to register the same in the Grand Lodge Books, and the certificate must be sent and addressed as follows:

*Mr. Charles Rasewig
on board the ship Kirkella
Captain Nollans*

Plymouth

to be left at the Post Office till called for

*Bro. C Rasewig sails from hear in the aforesaid ship
tomorrow morning for Rio Janeiro, in Brazil, and will
touch at Plymouth, should the wind prove fair expects to
be there in a very few days...*

Your most obedient servant and brother

John Dawson

Secretary

In a busy port such as Hull, foreign sailors were an important source of recruits for masonic lodges. On 9 January 1815, Dawson again wrote to the Grand Secretary, forwarding initiation fees for Niclaws Beyer, of Stralsund, a mariner aged 25, and Gustaf Ohlstrom, a mariner of Sweden, aged 24, both of whom had been initiated on 8 January. Dawson asked the Grand Secretary to send their certificates as soon as possible, as they were both on the point of sailing in a few days. A month later, on 13 February 1815, Dawson wrote reporting the initiation of Niels Petter Boysen, gentleman, of 'East Rice in Norway', aged 25.

Tales from Great Queen Street II: A Canonbury Tale

Extract from the Centre's web site

The 16th-century Canonbury Tower is one of London's most distinctive landmarks. It is now the home of the Canonbury Masonic Research Centre. In its long history, Canonbury Tower has had some interesting previous connections with freemasonry. The most notable event was probably in 1797, when Canonbury House was the venue for the annual feast of the Premier Grand Lodge, which was reported in *The Scientific Magazine and Freemasons' Repository* 9 (July 1797), pp. 39-40, as follows:

'Masonic Intelligence

London, Wednesday, July 5, 1797

This day the Society of Free and Accepted Masons, under the Constitution of England, (His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales being Grand Master) held their Annual Feast, at Canonbury-House, under the direction of the Lodge of Country Stewards. The Lodge was opened in the anti-chamber, whence the procession in all due masonic form, with splendid regalia, passed into the large room, where a most numerous and respectable assembly of Brethren was collected. The chair was taken by Alderman Newnham, supported on the right by the Worshipful Brother Counsellor Downing, Provincial Grand-Master of the County of Essex: and on the left, by Brother E. Dowling, Senior Master of the Lodge of the

Three Grand Principles. Brother Wingfield, Master of the Lodge of Country Stewards, and Brother John Dowling, Past Master of the same Lodge, officiated as Wardens. The exertions of the Stewards were not confined to the present gratification of their numerous friends then assembled, they opened an additional source of pleasure, by the production of several subscriptions to the Female Charity School, under the protection of Her Royal Highness the Dutchess of Cumberland. On this occasion, the venerable Master of the Knights Templars, Captain Hannam, was respectably conspicuous in bringing the collection of ten guineas from his Chapter. The meeting was honoured with the presence of many Grand Stewards; and the whole was conducted with all the order, harmony, and friendship, which the principles of the Royal Craft enforce, and by which it is the pride and the wish of every good mason to regulate his life and actions.'

Canonbury Tavern, the inn opposite Canonbury Tower, had been built by 1730, and its noted tea-gardens were one of the many attractions which at that time made Islington a popular destination for summer excursions by Londoners (VCH Middx, 8, p. 19). By the 1850s, the development of Islington and Canonbury as suburbs of London was proceeding apace, and, as the population of the area grew, so there was a demand for the establishment of local masonic lodges. On 25 September 1855, a lodge was warranted to meet at the Canonbury Tavern, Canonbury Lodge No. 955 (from 1863, No.

657). Its first joining member was Henry Gustavus Buss, who in 1878 was appointed Assistant Grand Secretary. The first initiate was Henry Salt, a heraldic engraver. The consecration of the new lodge, on 22 February 1856, was reported in *The Freemasons' Magazine* (March 1856), pp. 199-200:

CANONBURY LODGE (No. 955). On the 22nd of February, we had the pleasure of visiting the above-named Lodge, held at Bro. Todd's, Canonbury Tavern, upon the occasion of its consecration - a ceremony so rare as to bring together a number of our most distinguished Brethren: among them we may note Bros. John Hervey, P.G.S.D.; Bisgood, D.Prov.G.M. for Kent; Gooch, D.Prov.G.M. for Wilts; John Mott Thearle, Prov.G.S.B. for Herts; Bohn, Filer, Wolley, Sullivan, Harrison, Friend, Paas, Todd, Buss, Creed, Broome, Richardson, Adlard, Jones, Cooper, Burton, Arliss, Binckes, Cox, Hart, Pullwarr, Massey, Hogg, Graves, Spencer, Underwood, Savage, Watson, and as many other Brethren. Bro. Todd's room is very elegantly furnished for Lodge purposes, of the most ample size, and capable of further extension. In honour of the solemn purpose for which the Brethren had been called together, the whole of the apartment had been reconstructed and beautified, and its walls adorned with busts of ancient and modern worthies, famous in poetry or song; its jets of gas, popping forth at regular intervals from out the clustering leaves from which they spring; its mirrors reflecting and re-reflecting everything, and giving a tout

ensemble well worthy a visit to behold. If other invitation were necessary, we have it directly opposite, in the old tower of Canonbury, with its quaint brickwork and funny little windows in the queerest places, from whence many of our past worthies looked forth upon the rural prospect spread before them; where the green grass grew for miles round the old tower without a break to the eye until you came to the heights of Hampstead and the tree-adorned slopes of Highgate. Thirty years since, we were accustomed for evening solace to wander down to the old Canonbury tea-gardens that stood on the site of the present, or taking a ramble through the fields by the New River, watch the endeavours of Young England to catch minnows with bent pins; or dwelling upon the philosophy that taught, as the old angler did, thus: "When I would beget content and increase confidence in the power and wisdom and providence of Almighty God, I will walk the meadows by some gliding stream, and there contemplate the lilies that take no care..." The old tower is completely built in, miles and miles of bricks and mortar surrounding it. Speculative builders - tiny Sir Thomas Maryon Wilsons in their way - have bricked and are bricking over all they can of grass or country, edging up even to Bro. Todd's tea-gardens. May his shadow nor his small preserve of country never be less.

The business of the Lodge commencing, it was opened in the Three Degrees, Bros. Gooch acting as W.M.; Wm. Watson, S.W.; Binckes, J.W.; Longstaff, Tyler. The petition for the new Lodge having been read and the

warrant produced, Bro. Laughlin made a most effective oration; after which the corn, oil, and wine, being placed in three elaborately-chased silver cups, from the atelier of Bro. John Mott Thearle, the ceremony of consecration took place, the Brethren saluting the M.W.Prov.G.M. Gooch. The W.M. Bro. Filer was then presented and installed in due form, and appointed as his officers, Bros. Hill, S.W.; Bohn, J.W. and Sec.; Wilson, S.D., Friend, J.D.; Buss, I.G. On the closing of the Lodge the Brethren adjourned to the banquet provided by Bro. Todd, who, as is his custom, left nothing to desire. The viands and wines were excellent, and the good-humour and general satisfaction of the Brethren at all the arrangements proved how well they had been cared for. ..

The W.M. proposed what he very appropriately designated as the chief toast of the evening, viz. "The Health of the Founder of the Lodge, their Worthy Secretary and esteemed Friend, Bro. Bohn". The necessity for a Lodge at Canonbury had been acknowledged for years; but as was usual in such matters, that which was the business of every one had not been attended to by any one, until Bro. Bohn, with a determination that did him the highest honour, took the matter in hand and carried it out most successfully. The thanks of the entire Masonic district thereabout were due to Bro. Bohn, as the father and founder of the first Canonbury Lodge. Bro. Bohn, in reply, expressed his great satisfaction at the honour done him on this occasion; for this he had laboured - this had been the

goal to which his ambition was directed - to establish a Lodge to the satisfaction of the Brethren. Conscious of having carried his labours to a successful conclusion, and proud of the title the W.M. had been pleased to confer upon him, viz. Founder of the Lodge, he begged to drink all their very good healths. Bros. Cooper, Levi, Thearle, and Bohn, contributed to the harmony of the evening; and time flew so quickly and merrily, that when we looked at our patent lever we doubted either our own eyes, or its hands, and seriously questioned its ability to tell us the time of day; but day it certainly was; and on the principle of being grateful for everything, we felt very thankful at the opportunity afforded us of getting home very early.

Thomas Bohn was a Past Master of the Royal York Lodge, No. 7, and the Old Concord Lodge, No. 172. His work for the Canonbury Lodge continued up until 1865, when he unexpectedly died, as a result of internal bleeding after swallowing a fish bone. Bohn was the main moving force in the establishment of a Royal Arch chapter attached to the Canonbury Lodge. The history of Canonbury lodge by W.A. Ball, published in 1956, describes how the lodge eventually left Canonbury. In November 1865, Todd sold his interest in the Canonbury Tavern to one Mr Goodwin. According to a petition sent by the lodge to the Grand Master, 'the said Mr Goodwin who is not a member of the Craft, has positively declined accommodation to the members of the said Lodge, and has refused them permission to hold their meetings in

his establishment'. The warrant stated that meetings of the lodge had to be held in the parish of St Mary Islington. The lodge had investigated the possibility of holding meetings at the 'Highbury Barn' and the Lamb Hotel, near the Metropolitan Cattle Market, but both were considered unsuitable. The lodge was given permission to meet outside Islington, and from 1866 met at Freemasons' Hall, then at Haxells Hotel in the Strand, then once again briefly at Freemasons' Hall, then at a variety of hotels and restaurants in the West End until 1942, when it returned to Freemasons' Hall, where it still meets.

The most notable figure associated with freemasonry in Canonbury was Matthew Cooke (d. 1883), the masonic scholar who first published the early fifteenth-century manuscript of the Old Charges, British Library, Additional MS. 23198, known in his honour as the Cooke Manuscript. Cooke was a musician, the son of Matthew Cooke the elder (?1761-1829), who was organist of St George's Bloomsbury and, briefly, the Curzon Chapel, Mayfair. Like his father, Matthew Cooke the younger was as a boy a chorister in the Chapel Royal and became an organist, acting as Honorary Music Master to the Royal Masonic School for Girls. He was initiated as a mason in the Canonbury Lodge at Canonbury Tavern on 18 June 1857, an occasion recalled at a festive board following a meeting of the lodge in 1861. Edward Cox, as Master, proposing the health of the visitors including Cooke, noted how 'Bro. Cooke had

been initiated in that room [in the Canonbury Tavern] and on the W.M.'s proposition...His titles were numerous, and the W.M. must fail if he attempted to recapitulate them; indeed he believed that Bro. Cooke had gone up so many degrees that it wanted but very few more to take him direct to the Grand Lodge above.' In response, Cooke said that 'Like all young children he came occasionally to the mother for a little pap. The song just concluded had a line in it which spoke of "giving him a good education," that had been done in his case, by the Canonbury Lodge, for in 955 he acquired that craving for Masonry in all degrees to which the W.M. had referred...' (*The Freemasons' Magazine*, New Series, 5 (Jul.- Dec. 1861), pp. 412-3).

In 1859, Cooke published a song called *The New-Made Mason* (a copy is in the British Library, pressmark H.1771.d). Whether it was based on personal experience of his initiation at Canonbury, he does not say.

'Give ear to my tale, Brother Masons, I pray
And ask, of yourselves, if it's true, what I say?
For I'll tell you just how it all happen'd to me,
When I took the first step, in the E.A. degree.

Chorus

For I'll tell you just how it all happen'd to me,
When I took the first step, in the E.A. Degree.

The night I was made I went home rather late,
My wife she looked blue, as she sat there in state,

And she asked, "where on earth had I been till that hour?"

With an accent that told me her temper was sour.

I said, "I would tell her some short three months hence",
At which, up she started, in mortal offence;
Off to bed - called the nurse - tuck'd the children up warm,
And prepared, when I came, to get up a smart storm.

I read all my letters, then march'd up to bed,
She got up the steam, - I forget what she said -
But I kept my own counsel, in spite of her tongue,
And dropped off in a snooze while her 'larum it rung.

Of course, I attended my lodge, each lodge-night,
And in its instructions I took great delight;
Still my wife was impatient for time to come round,
As I'd promised to tell her where I might be found.

She said, - "she believ'd there was some one about",
"Some shameful young hussey that oft kept me out,"
"Whilst at home she sat aching, and quaking, for fear",
"Something dreadful had happen'd - the thought made her queer".

Thus we had gone on for some three months, or more,
Returning from work - she met me at the door,
In her hand was a bill, which she thrust in my face,

As she said - "Sir and Brother, here's your apron and case."

"A Mason your Lordship has lately become,"
"And that's been the reason you've come so late home!"
"Here's some man left this apron, you silly old goose!"
"And, betwixt you and me, that said apron's no use!"

"But if you abroad with an apron must roam,"
"I'll find your old breeches, - and wear them at home;"
"And if you are allowed to kiss my sister Sue,"
"Masons don't serve me so, - I'll be shot if they do!"

Next day, rather late, I indulged in a snore,
(The tale of the poker she'd heard of before)
I felt cold, as I slept, and awoke with a twinge,
For she'd turned down the bed-clothes to look for the singe!

MORAL

Now all you young Masons take warning by this;
When first you are made, tell your wives with a kiss,
Tho' we cannot admit them to see what we do,
There's no husband that's found to his wife, half so true.

Notwithstanding the light-hearted nature of this song, Cooke was a cantankerous figure who was one of many turbulent influences in English freemasonry in the 1860s and 1870s. He protested against the award of the rank of

Past Grand Master to the Prince of Wales, arguing that precedent showed that the rank of Grand Patron was more appropriate. At a Grand Lodge in June 1871, he made a violent, virtually libellous, attack on the Grand Secretary and his officials for allegedly using the premises at Great Queen Street to promote additional degrees. This led to a huge controversy within freemasonry, and Cooke, to his great indignation, was disciplined by the Board of General Purposes.

Even the publication of Cooke's edition of the Old Charges created ill-feeling. Cooke was a regular contributor to *The Freemasons' Magazine*. When the editor, Henry George Warren retired in 1865, Cooke's connection with it ceased. However, it was agreed that his edition of the Old Charges would be printed by the new proprietor of *The Freemasons' Magazine*, William Smith, at his printing office, 'The Scientific Press'. In Cooke's words, "'The Scientific Press' coolly took eighteen months to print this book of one hundred and eighty pages. Subscribers died and others repudiated their orders during such a lapse of time.' Cooke did not receive any indication of the cost of printing until two weeks after the book was delivered. The bill when it arrived proved to be 'so monstrous in amount that we felt it could only be settled by putting witnesses into a box to prove it was more than twice as much as a fair and reasonable printer would claim'. (*The Masonic Press*, 1 (1 January 1866), pp. 6-8). Cooke had already decided to start his own journal, *The Masonic Press*, as a rival to

The Freemasons' Magazine. Smith's writ for payment of the outstanding amount on the printing of the Old Charges arrived as *The Masonic Press* was about to be launched, a move which Cooke interpreted as an attempt to strangle the new periodical at birth. Indeed, *The Masonic Press* proved very short-lived, ceasing publication after just three months. Cooke's belligerence was not confined to masonic matters. He fell foul of the formidable Keeper of Printed Books at the British Museum, Anthony Panizzi, for his refusal to comply with new regulations requiring readers to return their books to the counter when they had finished with them. Sadly, Cooke's old age was clouded by financial difficulties, and he was a candidate for relief from the Royal Masonic Benevolent Institution in 1881, dying in the home two years later. (*The Freemason*, 13, 1881, p. 217; 15, 1883, p. 315).

Cooke's affection for the Canonbury Lodge, and for Canonbury Tower, was considerable. In 1858, he published a song entitled *Nine-fifty-five*. It was printed, like *The New-Made Mason*, by J. H. Jewell, a music publisher at 104 Great Russell Street in Bloomsbury. It is 'Fraternally dedicated, by Permission, to Samuel Hill Esq^{re} W.M. Canonbury Lodge, 955, by the Author and Composer, Matthew Cooke, Late one of the Children of Her Majesty's Chapels Royal, A Brother of the Above Lodge'. The song mostly consists of laboured word play on the names of the members of the lodge, but begins by linking the Canonbury Lodge firmly with Canonbury

Tower. A copy is in the British Library, pressmark I.600.(3.).

'Near the tow'r of Queen Bess, which in Islington stands,
And where she oft hunted o'er all its broad lanes;
A Lodge of Freemasons doth meet, work, and thrive;
Its number we know to be, "Nine-fifty-five."
Canonbury's the name of the Lodge so well known,
Though young in the craft yet its praises have flown,
For the members are earnest in MASONRY'S art,
And one and all strive to excel in their part.
CHORUS (fortissimo)
This Lodge of Freemasons doth meet, work, and thrive;
Its number we know to be "Nine-fifty-five".

Though to rhyme all the names is a task hard, and long,
If you'll kindly excuse, I'll attempt it in song,
And as they come handy, take long ones, or short,
They're all sure to fit as they're of the right sort.
We've some dignified members, an *Abbott, Duke, King*,
Besides an odd *Chancellor*, under their wing;
A *Gordon*, two *Rogers*, a *Buss*, and *Molloy*,
With *Nicholls*, and *Roberts*, who never are coy.
Chorus.

We're high in our nations, our Master's a *Hill*!
He's both brother and *Friend*, which we can't match at will;
Both *Ensom's* and *Worman*, are mason's [*sic.*] of *Worth*,
And there's *Halton* and *Gobey* to keep up our mirth,

There are some *Folkes* will say that we've names very hard,
In both *Filer* and *Irons*, but they're each a trump card;
Then *Layton* and *Collingwood*, *Wilson* and *Higgins*,
A happier quartett you wont find at the "diggins"!
Chorus.

It's a flourishing set for both *Berry*, and *Beach*,
Won't let *Kirkham*, and *Willis*, get out of their reach
Lest *Ned Driver*, and *Turner*, should start them to *Gilling*
Who to put on the curb chain is never unwilling.
There are more to be sung; some are teasers, I own,
Such as *Cornick*, as well as our past Master *Bohn*
The founder of this little Lodge that's so bright
Where in CHARITY, FRIENDSHIP, and LOVE, we unite.
Chorus.

If I stop now, and don't keep the *Ball* on the roll
I never shall *Winn*, or approach to the goal
Where I hope to arrive, without causing a crowd
And finish this line, by lugging in *Stroud*,
There's *Todd*, with a *Cheeswright* who's come to the
House;
When his wefe's [*sic.*] in the straw wer'e [*sic.*] all mum as
a mouse,
And he says, - "that as we of good wishes don't stint her,
He'll *Buke* us an out-and-out rarebit next *Winter*."
Chorus.

Thene [*sic.*] of fowls he's two *Cox*! but we can't eat 'em
Rawe,
So a *Cooke* he must have to cook them for our man.
And he hopes that the *Cutts* each one gets, with his malt,
Will be properly season'd with pepper and *Salt*.
As each brother's been mentioned, by name, in my song,
And I scorn any meaning that's felt to be wrong,
Then in brotherly friendship, all here will combine
In a toast to our Lodge with a bumper of wine.
Chorus.

A copy of *Nine-Fifty-Five* was deposited in the British Museum on 16 June 1858, but, despite its genial and affectionate invocation of the young lodge, within a few months Cooke had resigned from Canonbury lodge. Although Cooke thus moved on in his masonic career, Canonbury Tower had clearly caught his imagination. In 1863, he was the moving force behind an attempt to form an 'Elizabethan Tower Lodge', to meet at the Canonbury Tavern. The file of rejected petitions to the United Grand Lodge of England for the establishment of new lodges, held by the Library and Museum of Freemasonry, includes the following petition, dated 30 May 1863, in Cooke's own elegant hand:

'To the Most Worshipful Grand Master of the United Fraternity of Ancient Free and Accepted Masons of England:
We, the undersigned, being regular registered Masons of the lodges mentioned against our respective names,

having the prosperity of the craft at heart, are anxious to exert our best endeavours to promote and diffuse the genuine principles of the art, and, for the conveniency of our respective dwellings [as well as in order to assist the masonic promotion of several brethren who see but little chance of preferment in the Order for years to come] and other good reasons, we are desirous of forming a new lodge to be called "The Elizabethan Tower Lodge".

In consequence of this desire, we pray for a warrant of constitution, empowering us to meet as a regular lodge, at the Canonbury Tavern, St Mary's Road, Islington, on the second Tuesday of every month, and there to discharge the duties of Masonry, in a constitutional manner, according to the forms of the order and laws of the grand lodge: and we have nominated and do recommend Brother Matthew Cooke to be the first master, Brother Frederick Hodge to be the first senior warden, and Brother Henry Headly Williams, to be the first junior warden of the said lodge. The prayer of petition being granted, we promise strict obedience to the commands of the grand master and the laws and regulations of the grand lodge.

Sam. Hill, Albert House, Canonbury Park. P.M.
Canonbury Lodge 955. Egyptian Lodge 29.
William Lucas Hanley, 1 Park Terrace, Highbury Park.
Antiquity No. 2, P.S.W and P.M. 5.
Thomas Mollay, 11 Spencer Terrace, Islington.
Canonbury 955. P.M. Egyptian No. 29.

Peter Lacis, Agricultural Hall, Islington. 13 and 1008.
P.M.

Frederick Hodge, 58 Holbein Hall, E.C. 318 Union.

Henry Headly Williams, 3 Caumont Chambers, City. 72
Peace and Harmony.

Matthew Cooke, 43 Acton Street, Gray's Inn Road, W.C.
Sec. Globe (No. 23). Sec. De-Grey and Ripon (No.
1207); Sec. Royal Albert (No. 1209), &c. &c.

We, the undersigned Officers of "The Globe Lodge", No. 23, do recommend the prayer of the foregoing petition, in accordance with the laws as set forth in the Book of Constitutions.

Ralph Milward Smith. W.M., P.M. 1044 and P.G.
Steward.

Robert Gibbons. S.W. (23.)

George Smith. J.W. (23.)

Matthew Cooke. Secretary (23.)'

Unfortunately, however, Cooke's proposal did not command full local support. In particular, the Canonbury Lodge declined to endorse the proposal, doubtless concerned that any new lodge in the area might affect its membership. A letter from Thomas Bohn, the founder of Canonbury lodge, indicating Canonbury's opposition, is attached to the petition. Further complications were caused by the fact that one of the proposers of the lodge, Henry Headley Williams, turned out not to be a master mason. Cooke moved rapidly to try and sort out this problem, and the boxes of miscellaneous correspondence

in the Library and Museum of Freemasonry contain the following letter by him to the Grand Secretary, William Gray Clarke, dated 22 June 1863:

'I saw Bro. William Young, Secretary Peace and Harmony lodge no. 72, and supplied him with certificate of Bro. Henry Headley Williams's raising in the Fitzroy lodge, last Thursday evening and Bro. Young promised to fill up the Grand lodge return and to have it at the Office on Friday. If he has done so our petition for the Elizabethan Tower lodge is *en regle* and, without dictating to you, may I venture to ask for a speedy decision from the M.W.G.M. and your kind offices in our favor? and am
Yours truly and fraternally
Matthew Cooke'

However, a speedy answer was not forthcoming, and on 27 June, Cooke wrote again to the Grand Secretary, enquiring anxiously about the progress of the petition:

'I saw Brother W. Young, Secretary of the Peace and Harmony Lodge, no. 72, last night and he informs me that he made the proper return accompanied by two certificates of the raising of Bro. Henry Headley Williams whose not being registered was the informality of the petition for the new lodge proposed to be called 'The Elizabethan Tower lodge', as some of the petitioners are very anxious to know if the petition has been submitted to the M.W.G.M., and to learn his lordship's

decision thereon, May I request the favour of a reply so that I can lay the same before them forthwith?'

An endorsement on Cooke's letter notes that the Grand Secretary replied on the same day, reporting that the Grand Master, Lord Zetland, was inclined to think that no further London lodges should be established unless there were very pressing circumstances. This apparently was the Grand Master's final decision on 'The Elizabethan Tower Lodge', and the petition was declined. Cooke's reaction to this disappointment is not recorded.

Tales from Great Queen Street III: An Old Masonic Hall in Sheffield

Extracts from the Centre's web site

Second year students of the School of Architecture at the University of Sheffield in South Yorkshire have recently undertaken projects on the former Sheffield Masonic Hall in Surrey Street in the centre of the city, which is now the 'Surrey and Fringe' pub and health centre. Shown here are measured drawings made by the students and imaginary projects suggesting new uses for the building.

Sheffield is the largest city in Yorkshire and the fifth largest in England. The first masonic lodge to be permanently based in Sheffield was warranted by the Ancient Grand Lodge in 1761. In 1765, this lodge switched its allegiance to the Premier Grand Lodge, and is now the Britannia Lodge No. 139. In 1772, another Ancients lodge, No. 72, was formed in Sheffield; in 1793 some members left no. 72 to form the Royal Brunswick Lodge, now No. 296.

In their early years, accommodation was a constant problem for these Sheffield lodges. A school room above an 18th-century terrace in Paradise Square was designed for use as a masonic hall, but its upkeep was expensive, and taverns proved cheaper and more convenient. In 1839, the Spanish political refugee, Mariano Martin de Bartolomé, a doctor who had become a mason while a

medical student in Edinburgh, was scandalised to find the Royal Brunswick Lodge meeting in a public house. He persuaded the Sheffield lodges to take rooms at the Sheffield Music Hall in Surrey Street. As the lodges grew, these rooms became increasingly inconvenient. In 1861, the Sheffield lodges bought an old Savings Bank at the corner of Surrey Street and Eyre Street, and this was converted into a masonic hall. In 1876, the converted Savings Bank was demolished and replaced by a new purpose-built hall, designed by the firm of Scargill and Clark. The new hall was, like many other masonic halls, financed by the formation of a Masonic Hall Company, whose shareholders were all freemasons, so that the lodges were 'virtually...their own tenants'. The Surrey Street hall was extended and remodelled in 1913. The architect on this occasion was A. E. Turnell, a Sheffield mason. Turnell's alterations included a new entrance incorporating copies of masonic decoration from the 18th-century meeting place in Paradise Square.

In the 1960s, a new Sheffield masonic hall was opened in the west of the city at Tapton Hall. The building in Surrey Street was converted into a pub with a health club attached. The pub is called the Surrey; the health club the Fringe.

The story of the Surrey Street Masonic Hall and its appearance while it was still used for masonic purposes can be traced in *The Freemason's Magazine* and its successor, *The Freemason*. The Library and Museum of Freemasonry possesses complete runs of these weekly magazines for freemasons, and they are one of the most important resources for local studies in the Library.

The opening of the converted Savings Bank is reported as follows:

Freemasons' Magazine and Masonic Mirror New Series 5 (Jul.-Dec. 1861), p. 237 (21 September 1861)

SHEFFIELD - Britannia Lodge (No. 162). *Inauguration of the New Freemasons' Hall*. The regular monthly meeting of this lodge took place on Thursday evening, the 12th inst. in the new hall, which is situated in the very centre of the town, at the junction of Surrey-street and Eyre-street. The building, which was originally erected, and has till recently been occupied as a Savings' Bank, presents two handsome facades of dressed stone, enriched by pilasters of the Ionic order, and is surrounded by a neat iron palisading. The freehold has been purchased by the Sheffield brethren; and, by the additional outlay of several hundred pounds, the building has been admirably adapted to Masonic purposes, to which alone it is dedicated. Great credit is due to Bros. White, Webster, and Longden, who have devoted much time and labour to superintending the workmen and

planning the alterations. The ground floor consists of entrance and staircase, a kitchen, furnished with an excellent cooking apparatus, and a dining room 31 feet by 24 feet, lighted by six large windows. The upper floor is approached by a winding staircase, and contains a convenient preparation room and lavatory; and the lodge-room, which is the same size as the dining-room, and is about 20 feet high. It is lighted by three large sheets of plate glass in the roof, which are tinted rose colour, richly ornamented, and have the letter G and a five pointed star in the centre. Rows of gas jets and reflectors are placed above these, and cast a beautiful light into the lodge, without the heat and discomfort of having gas burning in the room. The ventilation is also admirably provided for...

Business being completed, the brethren adjourned to the dining-room, where a splendid banquet awaited them, to which they did ample justice. The speeches made were as usual on such occasions. The brethren felicitated each other on having at length emerged from their long confinement in the back rooms of the Music-hall, and established themselves in so excellent a hall of their own, which may certainly vie with any other in the province...

By 1870, this accommodation was proving inadequate, and in 1871 a committee was appointed to sell the premises to a limited company, which would build a new masonic hall. The Masonic Hall Company was formed in 1874. The laying of the foundation stone of the new

Surrey Street hall was reported in The Freemason as follows:

The Freemason 9 (1876), p. 283 (June 24 1876):

On the 23rd ult., [May] the foundation-stone of a new Masonic Hall, which is to be erected in Sheffield, was duly laid. The site is in Surrey-street, at the junction of that thoroughfare with Eyre-street. The hall is not intended to be a large building, but it is expected that additions will be made to it...Messrs. Scargill and Clark are the architects, and Mr James White, of Penistone-road, the contractor.

At five o'clock in the afternoon there was a large assemblage of the Freemasons of the district to witness the ceremony of laying the stone, which was undertaken by Dr. Bartolomé, P.P.G.J.W. [Past Provincial Grand Junior Warden]. The proceedings were opened by Bro. Alex Hay, P.P.G.S.B. [Past Provincial Grand Sword Bearer]., and P. Z.[a Royal Arch rank], who said that they had met on the present occasion to lay the first stone of the New Masonic Hall. He would just explain that it had been the wish of the directors to lay this stone with full Masonic honours, but various reasons had arisen why this should not be carried out. In the first place, it would have been necessary to have invited the Provincial Grand Lodge to have attended, and also the principal members of the heads of the Corporation, and other persons and rulers in the town. That was according to ancient and

Masonic custom. They, however, did not think they were justified in spending large sums of the shareholders' money in obtaining the honours above referred to. Having decided so far, they next looked at the best thing to be done, and decided that one of the members in Sheffield should lay this stone. It was the unanimous wish of the officers and brethren they had spoken to on the subject that Bro. Bartolomé should be invited to lay this stone, and he must say he believed no member in Sheffield was more fully entitled to the honour...

The Rev. Canon Blakeney then offered up prayer, after which Dr Bartolomé was presented with a mallet and trowel, the latter having engraved upon it the following words:- 'Presented to Bro. Mariano Martin De Bartolomé, P.P.G.W., Provincial G.H. by the Masonic Hall Company, Limited, on the occasion of his laying the foundation stone of the New Masonic Hall, Sheffield, 23rd May 1876'. The laying of the foundation stone was then proceeded with. In a cavity beneath it was placed a bottle containing copies of the memorandum and articles of association of the company, the 'Freemason', the 'Sheffield Daily Telegraph', the 'Independent', the library scheme, a short history of the hall, together with coins, and a list of the Past Masters and acting Masters of the Britannia, Brunswick and Wentworth Lodges...

The opening of the new hall was reported as follows:

The Freemason 10 (1877), p. 299 (July 21 1877)

A new masonic hall was opened at Sheffield on Wednesday, 18th inst., by Bro. Sir Henry Edwards, Bart., Prov. Grand Master West Yorkshire. There was a large gathering of brethren from all parts of the country, about 250 being present. The hall has been erected at a cost of about £6000. It is in the classical style of architecture. The lodge room, the chief feature of the building, is upwards of 50 feet long, and is magnificently decorated. At the conclusion of the opening ceremony the brethren dined at the Cutler's Hall.

A more detailed description of the building appeared the following week:

The Freemason 10 (1877), p.311 (28 July 1877)

The new hall fronts to Eyre-Street and Surrey-street (standing on the site of the Old Hall) it is built entirely of dressed stone, partly of that of the old building. It is in the classical style of architecture, of a neat and substantial character, the decorations being quiet, yet including the conventional square and compasses &c.; the tout ensemble, though suggestive of durability, is pleasing. The building contains a lodge room and a banqueting room, and there is a spacious cellar. The banqueting room, which is on the ground floor, is 51 feet long by 26 feet wide by 15 feet high, it is lighted by double windows of plate glass, the inner ones being ornamented with Masonic emblems embossed thereon. A

serving window gives direct communication with the kitchens, which are extensive and fitted up with all modern requirements. The furniture of the banqueting room can be readily lowered into the cellar, which extends the full size of the building.

The lodge room, which is over the banqueting room, is 51 feet long by 26 feet wide by 24 feet high, having an arched room springing from a cornice running round the room, ornamented with moulded ribs and panels, and carved bosses. The walls are relieved with columns, which have foliated capitals springing from ornamented carbels, from which the ribs in the roof form one continuous line. The whole of the fittings are of polished pine, slightly stained and varnished, which produce a very pleasing effect. The east end is occupied by a dias of three steps, along the north and south sides runs a raised platform, so that a double row of chairs can be placed, enabling the brethren occupying the back seats to see and hear with comfort. At the west end is an organ, built expressly by the firm of Messrs Brindley and Foster, of Sheffield, the following is the specification: -

GREAT ORGAN, compass CC to G 3. 1. Open diapason, metal, 8 feet, 56 pipes; 2. Lieblich Gedact, wood and metal, 8 feet, 56 pipes; 3. Dulciana, zinc metal grooved into No. 2 in bass, 8 feet; 4. Flauto Traverso, wood and metal, 4 feet, 56 pipes.

SWELL ORGAN. 5. Violin diapason, zinc metal, H bass to CC, 8 feet, 56 pipes; 6. Salecet metal, 4 feet, 56 pipes; 7. Oboe, metal, 8 feet, 56 pipes. PEDAL CCC to E. Couplers. 8. Bourdon wood, 16 feet, 29 pipes, two composition pedals; 9. Swell to Great; 10. Swell to Pedal; 11. Great to Pedal.

The appearance of the lodge room when illuminated is brilliant, and when the promised decorations have been completed there is little doubt about its being one of the most beautiful Masonic temples in the provinces. We are glad to hear that the main part of the work of an ornate nature has been reserved for the interior. Both rooms are lighted by very chaste gaseliers, and are warmed by hot water on the most improved principles; the ventilation is on Tobin's system. In addition to these two large rooms there are, on the ground floor, a club room, commodious kitchens, lavatory &c.; on the first floor, one small lodge room and a convenient cloak room; a wide passage with a broad flight of stairs lead to the lodge room; on the second floor are several rooms, affording accommodation to a resident Tyler. The acoustic properties of all the rooms, we are happy to say, are perfect. The entrance to the hall is made through the adjoining premises, which we have already described; the arrangements are such that, at any future time, these can be pulled down and more spacious premises erected in the same style as the new hall; when this is done there will be not only spacious offices & c. necessary for the lodges, but plenty of accommodation for a club. The

whole of the properties are freehold, and are owned by the Sheffield Masonic Hall Company, Limited, the shares of which are held solely by the lodges or brethren:- virtually, therefore, they are their own tenants- a move in the right direction (though it is only fair to say that it is many years since a Sheffield lodge met in a public-house), and we trust the day is not far distant when every brother will realise the fallacy of the poet's limes, where he goes on to say that he

'May sigh to think he still has found
His warmest welcome at an inn'

Tempora mutantur; to day every lodge may, or should, meet under its own roof, or, at least, in a room set apart for the purpose, yet in no way connected with a public house. Practice being ever preferred to precept we feel bound to point to Sheffield as an example we would urge upon others to follow. To the true Craftsman there is nothing, in our way of thinking, so undignified as the association of a lodge with a public house...

The Freemason also gave a detailed description of the 1913 alterations and extensions to Surrey Street.

The Freemason, 53 (1913-4), p. 328 (22 Nov. 1913)

After undergoing alterations and renovations costing over three thousand pounds, the Sheffield Masonic Hall, Surrey Street was reopened on the 12th inst. by Bro. W.

Richard Wilson, Deputy Provincial Grand Master of West Yorkshire...

Sheffield Masons have now a building which for elegance and convenience compares favourably with any Masonic Hall in the kingdom. The remodelled hall, in addition to affording space for two Masonic meetings, increases the accommodation available for public purposes. In 1912 there were no fewer than ten regular Lodges and eleven other degrees in the city, and the fact that the membership was rapidly increasing caused the directors to launch the present scheme of extension...Summarised, the completed scheme provides an additional Temple and supper-room, adequate kitchen accommodation, a more spacious banqueting hall, large assembly rooms for Provincial Grand Lodge, a wider entrance hall, suitable cloakroom and lavatory accommodation, as well as rooms for caretakers and servants, and for storage purposes. The plans selected were those of Bro. A. E. Turnell, of the Hallamshire Lodge.

Perhaps the most striking appearance of the building is the new Temple, which has been designed in the Georgian style. Its appearance is chaste and pleasing. The walls are split up into panels and finished with a plaster cornice and coved ceiling, which is only relieved by the twelve signs of the Zodiac in modelled plaster. In order to bring out the detail in higher relief, a simple treatment of Wedgwood blue has been used in the panels.

There is also a colour scheme showing the rising sun over the Master's chair, and the Corinthian capitals and bases in the recess near the chair are bronzed in accordance with the traditional description of the capitals to the entrance of King Solomon's Temple. The caps and bases on either side of the door are also bronzed in a similar manner. The chairs and pedestals for the principal officers are in oiled teak, upholstered with pigskin, whilst the benches on either side of the hall are of similar material. The deep nut brown of this furniture, in contrast with the white walls, has produced an artistic colour scheme. The tympani at the back of the officers' chairs, and also the faces of the pedestals to the chairs, are jewelled with the correct Masonic emblems in dull aluminium. It is interesting to note that the sun, moon, square, and compasses, and level and plumb-rule on each side the Master's Chair, and also the tympanum over the main entrance door, are copied from the symbols on each side of the entrance door to the old Masonic Hall in Paradise Square.

By the 1950s the Surrey Street Hall was becoming overcrowded and car parking was becoming a problem. Some Sheffield lodges were meeting elsewhere at the Port Mahon Rooms. It was agreed to establish a single masonic centre for Sheffield, and the foundation stone of the new Sheffield Masonic Hall, an extension to a 19th-century house, Tapton Hall, was laid by the Provincial Grand Master for Yorkshire West Riding on 22 June 1965. Under the stone in a cavity were placed several

masonic items, including a bicentenary jewel of the Britannia Lodge. The new hall was dedicated by the Provincial Grand Master on 24 June 1967. The Surrey Street hall is now the 'Surrey and Fringe' pub and health centre. Some of the furniture and fittings from Surrey Street were moved to Tapton Hall, most notably a spectacular chandelier which now adorns the main staircase at Tapton.

Thanks to Frank Groarke, the Secretary of the Sheffield Masonic Study Circle, for checking records and clarifying the circumstances of the move from Surrey Street to Tapton Hall.

IV FREEMASONRY AND THE RADICAL TRADITION IN BRITAIN

'The Devil's Freemason': Richard Carlile and his Manual of Freemasonry

*Lecture to the Friends of the Library and Museum of
Freemasonry, Freemasons' Hall London, 19 March
2002*

In 1827, Robert Beverley, the Deputy Provincial Grand Master for the North and East Ridings of Yorkshire, wrote to the Grand Secretary about the turmoil which had overtaken the Humber Lodge in Hull, the oldest lodge in the province. The lodge had decided to build a masonic hall. The landlord of the inn where the lodge had hitherto met was upset about his potential loss of earnings. In a desperate attempt to prevent the lodge leaving his premises, the landlord arranged for two constables to be placed at the inn door on the evening of a lodge meeting. When the master appeared, the constables arrested him (on what grounds are not clear) and carried him off to prison.

After a great tumult, the master was released. The lodge decided, not surprisingly, to move elsewhere. The lodge's former landlord sought revenge. He persuaded three other members of the lodge, the most prominent of

whom was a Brother Roach, to blackball everyone proposed for membership of the lodge, so that it would eventually collapse for lack of members. The rest of the lodge eventually realised what was going on, and expelled the blackballers.

Brother Beverley seemed to view these events with equanimity. The immediate occasion of his letter to Grand Lodge was an action of Brother Roach which he regarded as far more heinous. In the words of the letter, 'Brother Roach, highly indignant at the scrape he has brought himself into, has commenced proceedings so unmasonic as in my opinion to call loudly for some punishment. He takes about with him Carlisle's publications on masonry, lends them to people, not masons, to read, and assures them all the secrets of masonry are there fully and completely exposed - and that anybody purchasing Carlile's book may know the whole secret for 2s 9d.'

This was not the only occasion on which publications by Richard Carlile figured in a lodge dispute. Curiously, the argument again involved the keeper of an inn used by a masonic lodge. In 1844, a formal complaint was made by the Master and Senior Warden of the Lodge of Hope and Charity in Kidderminster against Richard Smith, the landlord of the Black Horse Inn, where the lodge met. They accused Smith of calling the Senior Warden a damned liar and a hypocrite in open lodge. The Senior Warden, Dr William Roden, went on to add the

following: 'On the same occasion, and whilst a Brother was being passed to the second degree, Bro. Smith had in his possession in open lodge a book called 'Carlile's Manual' which he opened inside the Book of Constitutions, as though to prevent notice. He was writing with a pencil either in the book itself, or a piece of paper placed in the book...I feel confident he was noting down those parts of the ceremony which differed from the Master's in the Chair and the system in Carlile's Book.' To support Roden's complaint, George Caswell, a past master of the lodge, added that Smith had produced 'Carlile's Manual of Freemasonry' in the smoke room of his inn.

In answering the complaints, Smith did not deny possessing Carlile's book. In fact, he said Dr Roden, who had brought the complaint, had on many occasions asked to borrow Carlile's book and had offered to contribute towards the cost of purchasing it. Moreover, Roden himself had used Carlile's manual when initiating masons. Smith further alleged that Caswell had also possessed Carlile's book, and had lent and sold copies to members of the lodge. Smith declared that he did not know it was an offence to possess this book, particularly as another member of the lodge had regularly offered to sell copies to newly initiated brothers.

This is the little red book which caused such controversy. It is one in a long line of publications which purport to reveal all the secrets of masonic ritual, passwords and

signs. Carlile's Manual is one of the most long-lived of these publications, having first appeared in 1825 and been fairly continuously in print since 1831. Carlile's book is one of the most comprehensive of these exposures of freemasonry, containing in addition to craft and royal arch rituals those of many additional degrees. For some of the additional degrees, Carlile's publication is in fact the earliest evidence of their ritual. Although published by a non-mason, this book has proved to be one of the most successful publications dealing with freemasonry, possibly because, as at Kidderminster, it has been used by masons themselves in learning ritual, a testament to the care with which Carlile did his work. Diane and Rebecca tell me that, after Gould's History, Carlile's Manual is the book most frequently brought into the library here for evaluation.

One wonders whether any of the freemasons at Kidderminster noticed a curious report of a death in *The Times* in 1843, and connected it with the little book that they had been using in their lodge meetings. The Times reported the death of the eccentric gentleman Richard Carlile, and described how he had left his body to be dissected. Initially Carlile had stipulated that his body should be given to the famous surgeon Sir William Lawrence for dissection and that his bones should be afterwards burnt. Lawrence refused to have anything to do with this body, so Richard Grainger, a surgeon who was later a pioneer of sanitary reform, agreed to lecture on the body. A great crowd gathered in the old operating

theatre at St Thomas's to view the proceedings, but the governors, hearing whose body was to be the subject of the lecture, refused to allow the dissection to proceed, for fear that it might suggest that the hospital supported the religious views of the dead man. This man, so notorious that, even when he was dead surgeons refused to dissect him, was the Richard Carlile who produced the *Manual of Freemasonry*. Why was he reviled in this way, and what connection did his work on freemasonry have with his other views?

Carlile was one of a group of working class radicals who, in the early nineteenth century, produced the first English working class political and philosophical literature. He was a pugnacious republican and opponent of conventional religion, who popularised the works of the radical social philosopher and deist, Thomas Paine. By conducting a brave and determined campaign, supported by his family and dozens of associates, Carlile effectively broke government censorship of the book trade, and perhaps did more than any single man to create modern freedom of the press. He espoused and publicised a wide range of causes that seemed very outlandish at the time but which are now more commonplace, such as vegetarianism, alternative medical treatments, birth control, divorce, and equality for women. Yet he was a man of unpredictable views who managed to alienate many of his own supporters. His intellectual inheritance is in many ways puzzling - when, shortly after his death, members of the London Secular Society tried to raise

funds for a monument in Kensal Green, they were unsuccessful, and only a handful of people attended the commemoration for the centenary of his death in 1943. It is only in recent years that Carlile's pivotal position in nineteenth century radical politics has become more evident. Carlile has, for example, emerged as something of a forefather of modern political protest. As a recent commentator Joss Marsh has put it: 'the Chartists' jailhouse refusals, the suffragettes' hunger strikes, the self-starvations and blanket rebellions of IRA terrorists and internees: all alike look back to Richard Carlile'.

When in 1939, S. J. Fenton published a pioneering study of Carlile in *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum* (this was the first modern scholarly account of Carlile, predating G.D.H. Cole's biography by four years, but is hardly known outside masonic circles), the Master of Quatuor Coronati lodge expressed relief that the only reason that Carlile was of interest to the lodge was his publication of the *Manual of Freemasonry*, so that the lodge did not have to concern itself with the rest of his activities. It is very easy to suggest that Carlile's interest in freemasonry was simply another of his many intellectual hobby-horses, akin to his enthusiasm for phrenology. However, it is striking that the *Manual of Freemasonry* is the only work of Carlile's prodigious output to have remained continuously in print. Moreover, Carlile went to a lot of trouble towards the end of his life to ensure that the book stayed in print, suggesting that he felt it was one of his most important achievements. Carlile's views on

freemasonry are essential for understanding the later stages of his career, and explaining some of his views which alienated his supporters, particularly on trade unions. Finally, Carlile's publications on freemasonry are important for helping to understand his connections with other radicals.

Carlile was born in Ashburton in Devon in 1790. His father had been by turns a shoemaker, exciseman, teacher and soldier, and had published a book of mathematical adages, but drank heavily, and abandoned his wife and children. Richard's mother was deeply religious and tried to drill her beliefs into her children, but what Richard remembered most vividly about his Devon upbringing were what he called the wasteful activities of his teenage years, such as badger baiting, squirrel chasing, Oak Apple Day, and, above all, the burning of effigies of figures such as Guy Fawkes and, ironically the man who was afterwards to become Carlile's great hero, Tom Paine. Carlile received a very basic education at charity schools, and in 1803 became a tinplate worker, making pots, pans and other utensils. It was a bad trade to choose, as hand plate working was being undermined by competition from northern factories. Carlile struggled to make a living, moving first from Devon to Portsmouth, and then finally moving to London. In 1812 or 1813, under the influence of Anglican advocates of moderate deism, he briefly contemplated taking holy orders, but instead, he married Jane, the daughter of a poor

Hampshire cottager. Within five years they had three sons.

From 1813 to 1817, Carlile worked for tinplate firms in Blackfriars and Holborn. London was at that time in a ferment of radical discussion and agitation, its streets crowded with tractsellers hawking William Cobbett's *Political Register* and other cheap papers aimed at working class radicals. Carlile was intoxicated by this heady atmosphere of debate and discussion. By the winter of 1816-1817, like many other workmen, he faced a bleak prospect as his employers reduced his hours. He began attending reform meetings, and in 1817 wrote his first essays. They were not very accomplished, prompting a comment from William Cobbett that 'A half-employed mechanic is too violent'. Nevertheless, in March 1817 Carlile gave up tin plate working to devote himself full-time to radical politics, selling such papers as *The Political Register* and the *Black Dwarf*. He afterwards remembered 'Many a day traversed thirty miles for the profit of eighteen pence'.

Among the contacts which Carlile formed at this time was William Sherwin, who briefly published a radical journal called *The Republican*, and in 1819 produced the more substantial *Sherwin's Political Register*. The risks involved in publishing political literature of this kind were considerable. The 1799 Unlawful Societies Act, which required the registration of freemasons' lodges, also stipulated severe penalties, including transportation,

for the sale of publications which breached various strict regulations. In March 1817, the Home Office ordered magistrates summarily to arrest the publishers of blasphemous and seditious writings. Sherwin and Carlile came up with an ingenious scheme. Carlile would be the nominal publisher of Sherwin's paper and run the various legal risks. In return, Sherwin would finance the publications, help provide copy, and give Carlile use of his premises in Fleet Street. Prison was evidently at this time a better bet for Carlile than starvation or the workhouse, and the arrangement with Sherwin enabled Carlile to launch himself as a radical publisher.

Carlile seized his chance enthusiastically, and flooded the streets of London with cheap political publications. Apart from the *Weekly Register*, Carlile also published political parodies by William Hone, Robert Southey's *Wat Tyler* (disavowed by its now respectable author on its first appearance), and many pamphlets designed to show that Britain was, in Carlile's words, 'a continued mass of Corruption, Falsehood, Hypocrisy and Slander'. Above all, Carlile published the works of Tom Paine, and Carlile's growing reverence for Paine is evident in his decision to name his third son after his hero. In 1817, Carlile was imprisoned for the first time, for blasphemy and sedition, committed by publishing an article maintaining that the poor were enslaved politically. On his release, Carlile returned to his publishing activities with renewed fervour. He also played an energetic part in

the Westminster election campaign of the celebrated radical politician Henry Hunt.

At this stage, Carlile was indistinguishable from many of the other London radical figures engaged in the struggle for parliamentary reform. In the words of Carlile's biographer, Joel Wiener, 'His obduracy was beginning to mark him out for advancement, but as yet he did little more than to repeat the ideas of others. Feelings of inferiority weighed heavily on him. He had a dumpy physical appearance; his West Country speech sounded awkward to London workers on those infrequent occasions when he attempted public oratory; and he was conscious of the inadequacies of his formal education. Yet singleness of purpose could, he realised, compensate for many defects'. It was the example of Paine which was responsible for the next stage in Carlile's development, and the study of freemasonry was to play a significant part in this process.

Paine's writings had been vigorously prosecuted ever since their first appearance, and they were consequently difficult to obtain. Carlile, convinced that Paine's works were 'the only standard political writings worth a moment's notice', felt that, if only Paine could be readily available in cheap editions, the momentum for reform would be unstoppable. First of all, Carlile published Paine's political works. This was risky enough, but the first indication that Carlile was about to cross the rubicon came in 1818, when he published Paine's *Essay on the*

Origins of Free Masonry. Although Carlile had previously published some anti-religious squibs, this was the first sign of his growing interest in religious matters.

Paine's short *Essay on the Origins of Free Masonry* is a good example of his strengths as a writer. Unlike many other writings on freemasonry at this time, it is detached, almost to the point of being sympathetic in tone, very clearly written, and thoroughly researched. Paine's proposition is laid out clearly at the beginning: 'It is always understood that Free Masons have a secret which they carefully conceal; but from everything that can be collected from their own accounts of Masons: their real secret is no other than their origin, which but few of them understand; and those who do envelope it in mystery.' The mystery was, according to Paine, as follows: 'Masonry...is derived, and is the remains of the religion of the ancient Druids; who, like the magi of Persia and the priests of Heliopolis in Egypt, were priests of the Sun. They paid worship to this great luminary, as the great visible agent of a great invisible first cause...'

Paine's suggestion that freemasonry was a remnant of the Druid religion was not a new one. It had previously been anticipated by eighteenth-century writers such as William Stukeley and John Cleland, the author of *Fanny Hill*. The Ancient Order of Druids was formed in 1781 by freemasons who sought to restore the druidical components to masonic ritual. The importance of Paine's essay on freemasonry lies instead in its relationship to his

other religious writings. His essay formed part of a reply, unpublished at the time of his death, to an attack by the Bishop of Llandaff on Paine's infamous work, *The Age of Reason*. *The Age of Reason*, partly written while Paine was imprisoned in revolutionary France, was, at one level, a compelling attack on christianity, and, on the other, an argument for the necessity of a more generalised deistic religion. The *Essay on Freemasonry* developed this thesis further by arguing that Christianity was a perversion of the ancient worship of the sun, and that freemasonry preserved these tenets in a purer form. Paine favoured a return to the ancient sun religion, developing a new solar method of chronology which he used to date his letters. This aspiration to return to the old sun religion was to haunt radical freethought for much of the nineteenth century. The *Essay on Freemasonry* was unpublished by Paine when he died, but a version, omitting the more abusive comments on christianity, was published by his executrix in 1810. The *Essay* was afterwards reprinted in this expurgated form in French in 1812. Carlile's 1818 edition was apparently the first unexpurgated edition of Paine's *Essay*, and reflects the assiduousness with which Carlile tracked down texts of Paine's works. Carlile's version was to form the basis of all subsequent editions of Paine's *Essay*.

Having printed the *Essay on Free Masonry*, the obvious next step for Carlile was to produce a cheap edition of Paine's infamous *Age of Reason*. All previous attempts to publish this work in England had ended in the

prosecution of the publisher. In December 1818, Carlile produced a cheap edition of *The Age of Reason*, aimed at the working class reader. Within a month, a prosecution against him for selling *The Age of Reason* was brought by the Society for the Suppression of Vice. Carlile responded by publishing further freethought tracts, and the government and the Vice Society worked together to bring a dozen prosecutions against Carlile between January and September 1819. Street vendors selling Carlile's publications were arrested, and his book stocks seized. The more Carlile was prosecuted, the more his business boomed. He moved to larger premises at 55 Fleet Street, which he christened 'The Temple of Reason', and which became the chief outlet for radical publications in London. He later recalled how 'I knew the face of almost every public man in London, by their coming into my shop for pamphlets'. Carlile was invited to join Henry Hunt as a speaker at a mass meeting for parliamentary reform at St Peter's Fields in Manchester. When the peaceful meeting was attacked by the Manchester yeomanry, Carlile saw their sabres 'cutting very near' him, and within minutes was surrounded by dying men, women and children.

Escaping from Manchester, Carlile published eye witness reports of the 'Peterloo Massacre' in the first issues of his new venture, a journal called *The Republican*. Joel Wiener summarises the importance of *The Republican* as follows: 'By the end of 1825, when *The Republican* had run its course after six contentious years, it had

established itself as one of the premier working-class journals of the early nineteenth century'. But *The Republican's* greatest years were yet to come. Carlile's more immediate concern was a trial for blasphemous libel in publishing *The Age of Reason*. Since the 1790s, radicals had used such trials as a means of gaining publicity, and a great set-piece trial was an indispensable rite of initiation for a major radical leader. Carlile seized his chance gleefully. He read aloud lengthy extracts from *The Age of Reason*, which were entered verbatim into the court record, so that anyone printing the record of the trial, a public document, could print *The Age of Reason* without fear of prosecution. He attempted to summon the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Chief Rabbi and the Astronomer Royal as witnesses, so that he could interrogate them on the truth of certain passages in the Bible. Despite all these stunts, Carlile was found guilty on two counts of blasphemous libel, and sentenced to three years in Dorchester gaol and a fine of fifteen hundred pounds.

Carlile was imprisoned in Dorchester from November 1819 to November 1825. These were perhaps his greatest years. Carlile in a sense pioneered the prison protest. Just as Nelson Mandela was latterly able to use letters and faxes to work towards majority rule in South Africa while still in prison, so Carlile turned his gaol cell in Dorchester into a 'Repository of Reason' and the focal point of the struggle for freedom of speech. In return for a weekly payment, Carlile was given a light, airy room,

containing a sink, bed and desk, as well as some oddments of furniture and a set of weights for training. These were donated by friends and supporters, who also sent him razors, hosiery, night caps and other gifts. Carlile was allowed to purchase his own provisions and hired two servants, one to run errands and the other to do laundry and cleaning. However, Carlile was kept away from other prisoners and visitors were discouraged. He was allowed only three hours exercise a week, and, when permitted this luxury, 'he was led out as a caged animal and exhibited to the gaze of the passing curious', degrading treatment which was remembered long afterwards in the small Dorset town.

Carlile developed a programme of rigorous mental and physical training. He read and wrote ceaselessly, constantly asking for supplies of books and periodicals. During the time of his imprisonment, he read thousands of books sent by his wife and friends. He bathed regularly at a time when this was an unusual habit, avoided alcohol, followed a vegetarian diet, used 'natural' herbal remedies when ill, and recommended the drinking of herbal tea. His aim in following such a regime was to make his personal behaviour moderate and temperate, but the immediate effect was to make him very fat.

In planning the battle for the freedom of the press from his gaolroom, the first footsoldiers deployed by Carlile were his family. He insisted that they should face the risks involved in continuing his publication activities.

His wife Jane, though personally unsympathetic to her husband's political activities, loyally took over the publishing house, and was duly sent to join her husband in Dorchester for two years. Carlile's sister Mary-Anne then took over, and was also eventually dispatched to Dorchester. By this time, Carlile's gaolroom was getting rather crowded - he complained that 'locked up as I am with wife, sister and child I find it difficult to accomplish the necessary quantity of reading and writing'. He demanded that Jane and Mary-Anne should be completely silent, but they refused. The strains of this communal imprisonment contributed to the subsequent breakdown of Carlile's marriage.

From July 1821, Carlile asked for volunteers to sell his publications, and the 'battle of the shopmen' began. Dozens of working class volunteers offered to sell Carlile's publications, and more than twenty were convicted and imprisoned between 1821 and 1824. These volunteers altogether served more than two centuries in gaol. Carlile carefully directed their trials from Dorchester. These tactics were incredibly successful. By jamming up the courts and prisons, and keeping the issue of freedom of the press constantly in the public eye, Carlile simply wore the government out. By 1825, the attorney general had thrown in the towel. There were no more prosecutions for publication of *The Age of Reason*.

The kind of ingenuity used to defeat the government is evident from the clockwork apparatus known as

'invisible shopman' used at one stage in Carlile's shop in Fleet Street. Customers selected the name of a forbidden publication, which was then dispatched by a series of chutes, flaps and pulleys, so that the customers never knew who sold it to them. Experiments were also made with speaking tubes. But the battle was not just about freedom of thought. Carlile was the first reformer to popularise the aggressively deist views of French Enlightenment thinkers such as Holbach and Volney. Supporters of Carlile formed themselves into debating clubs, known as Zetetic societies after the Greek word for truth, which engaged in 'infidel' anti-christian and scientific debate.

Meanwhile a flood of publications issued from Dorchester gaol, which, it was claimed, was the only place in the country where true freedom of expression could be found. Of these productions, the most influential was *The Republican*, which was avidly consumed by Carlile's supporters throughout the country. In 1825, in opening the twelfth volume of *The Republican*, Carlile declared that 'my last effort in Dorchester gaol will be the annihilation of Free Masonry, at least, such an exposure of it, as will shame sensible and honourable men from joining it, and draw many from it'. He wrote breathlessly to one of his Sheffield supporters saying that he was 'full of Masonry', and asking him to send twelve of the best steel pens to furnish him for the battle. He urged another correspondent not to be ill until the exposure of

freemasonry was complete. He promised to provide 'the only correct history of masonry', which would be a great blow to superstition. By exposing masonry as empty tom-foolery, he would also, by analogy, expose christianity: 'I shall strike the very roots of masonry, and, in so doing, I shall un-christianize thousands'.

Throughout the second half of 1825, *The Republican* was filled with transcripts of the rituals not only of craft masonry, but also of the Royal Arch and many additional degrees, interspersed with Carlile's comments. Many features distinguished Carlile's exposure from earlier works. First, it was explicitly linked to Carlile's attacks on the monarchy and religion, and used the kind of mocking rhetoric and satire which characterised radical publications of the period. There were dedications and open letters to George IV, urging him to give up his position as Grand Patron of Masonry and patronize mechanics' institutes instead. Carlile notes 'I recollect reading...of the Duke of Sussex toasting his mother, as the mother of six masons. If she had been the mother of six practical house-building masons, it would have been more to her credit...'

However, despite the acerbic tone of Carlile's commentary, he also provides a wide-ranging and well-informed account of the history of freemasonry. He had assembled a comprehensive masonic library at Dorchester, including the works of William Preston, George Oliver, Samuel Hemming and Waller Rodwell

Wright, together with earlier exposures such as *Jachin and Boaz* and works by non-masons, such as Thomas de Quincey's essay on the origins of freemasonry and Rosicrucianism. He had obtained part of the library of William Finch, a tailor from Canterbury who published commentaries on masonic ritual. Although Finch was only following the lead given by Preston and others, he fell foul of Grand Lodge, and eventually died, crushed, in Carlile's view, by the opposition of Grand Lodge. Carlile remembered as a young man sheltering from the rain in Finch's bookshop, and being fascinated by the masonic prints and emblems displayed there. Carlile made very intelligent use of the materials he had assembled in Dorchester. For example, he was one of the first authors to emphasise the distinction between operative masonry and the modern speculative freemasonry which developed from 1717. In reprinting the so-called Leyland-Locke manuscript from Preston, he expressed doubts about the authenticity of the document because of the appearance of words such as 'chemistry', the grounds on which the document is indeed today considered a forgery.

The most remarkable feature of Carlile's exposure is the accuracy of the printing of the ritual and its comprehensiveness. His skills as a textual critic are evident from the care with which he blends information from various books, particularly Hemming and Finch. He also made extensive use of manuscripts provided by some of his supporters who had been masons. For

example, a Bristol mason who wrote a letter of support to Carlile signed 'Hiram the Second' was probably the source of the bye-laws of the Baldwin Encampment printed with the Knight Templar ritual. Carlile's frequent complaints about the cost of this 'masonic trash' suggest that he also purchased manuscripts containing ritual of additional degrees. A 1796 attack on the additional degrees, *A Word to The Wise*, notes that the masonic Knights Templars often read their ritual from manuscript, suggesting that it was not of any great antiquity. Finch and others also sold manuscript copies of ritual, charging by the line, and some of these rituals were acquired by Carlile.

As Carlile's study of freemasonry developed, its tone changed. Again, the most important influence was that of Paine. At first, Carlile argued that there was not a shred of antiquity in masonic ritual. But, on rereading Paine's *Essay on Freemasonry*, Carlile felt that Paine was right in suggesting that freemasonry in some way reflected ancient forms of religion. Carlile decided that masons had forgotten the true significance of their craft, and that he would have to teach it to them. 1825 was to be for masons AL (the year of light) 1. Carlile declared that: 'I shall masonify masons, not only by teaching them what is morality, about which they talk without understanding; but by showing them what is the real meaning of all their boasted secrets, about which they talk without understanding'.

The twelfth volume of *The Republican* was perhaps the first exposure of masonic ritual directed at a large working-class audience. The weekly circulation of *The Republican* was at that time about 12,000 (with a much higher readership), and, as Carlile's discussion of freemasonry gradually unfolded, it was avidly followed by his supporters. One correspondent wrote that 'Thy blow at masonry is a masterpiece, and when completed will be one of the best books for lending out that could be put in a library. I know several who intend to avail themselves of the residing of it by that means'. Susannah Wright, a Nottingham woman who had been imprisoned for selling Carlile's books, sent details of an Oddfellow ritual supplied by her husband. Another correspondent sent a Druid ritual. Again, the versions of these rituals in *The Republican* are among the earliest such texts surviving for these organisations. Carlile went on to expose God, by displaying a provocative caricature in the window of his Fleet Street shop, which caused unruly crowds to gather.

At the end of 1825, Carlile was unexpectedly released from Dorchester gaol. In the final numbers of *The Republican*, Carlile had published some attacks on christianity by the Rev. Robert Taylor, one of the most bizarre figures in the radical world at this time, and, on his release from Dorchester, Carlile formed a close alliance with Taylor.

Taylor had drifted into the priesthood after graduating from Cambridge, and was appointed to a post in a

country parish in Sussex. On meeting a deist there, Taylor was easily won over to his views. Taylor became convinced that all religions derived from sun worship and that Christianity, by substituting Christ for the sun, was blasphemous. He wrapped up these ideas in an elaborate panoply of spurious astrological and etymological learning. Becoming a pariah in the English church, Taylor went to Dublin, which soon became too hot to hold him. Pitching up in London, he began to preach at deist gatherings, held as mock services on Sundays. Taylor was a natural showman, and an ebullient speaker. He often wore baroque clerical attire which shocked his audiences. Henry Hunt called him 'The Devil's Chaplain'. Taylor's sermons were reprinted under the title 'The Devil's Pulpit', with the epigram 'and a bonnie pulpit it is'. Much of these sermons read like a kind of mocking music hall patter, as in this extract on John the Baptist:

John the Baptist! John the Baptist! How d'ye do, Johnny?
Where d'ye come from? Who are you when you're at
home? What d'ye mean by making ducks and drakes of
the people - by sousing them i' the horse-pond? What
d'ye mean by the kingdom of heaven being *at hand*?

The lecture concluded with Taylor gobbling like a turkey.

Carlile's study of freemasonry had convinced him that it concealed ancient deist truths. Taylor's arguments

reinforced his conviction that the value of christianity was also in its allegorical representation of ancient moral truths. Just as Carlile had taught masons the true meaning of masonry, so he and Taylor would now teach the true meaning of christianity. Carlile and Taylor set out on 'infidel missions', and Carlile became prone to even more extreme statements, such as (prefiguring John Lennon) 'I am the Jesus Christ of this Island, and of this age'. In truth, a more appropriate label might have been, by analogy with the title given to Taylor, 'The Devil's Freemason'.

In May 1830, Carlile and Taylor's partnership reached its climax when they opened the Rotunda in Blackfriars Road, which became the focus of radical and freethought activity during the period leading to the passing of the Reform Act in 1832. The Rotunda was a large complex containing a theatre, lecture rooms, refreshment and game rooms, which later became the Surrey Institute. Taylor spoke two or three times weekly, presenting what can only be described as multi-media presentations, with the signs of the zodiac painted on the dome of the theatre, and spectacular use of lighting and theatrical effects, particularly during Taylor's most popular performances, *Raising the Devil* and *Sons of Thunder*. Taylor was sometimes accompanied by a female chorus playing guitars. From the time the Rotunda opened, Carlile was keen that Taylor should examine the allegories of freemasonry, and Carlile hoped it might

even be possible publicly to enact masonic rituals at the Rotunda.

Eventually, in 1831, Taylor was ready to give a course of lectures on freemasonry. Thus, at the supreme moment of the Reform crisis, the main centre of radical activity in London was preoccupied with the spiritual allegories of freemasonry. Taylor's aim in these talks is clearly explained at the beginning: 'I shall prove Free Masonry to be the combined result of the Egyptian, Jewish and Christian superstitions, and absolutely identical with the celebrated Eleusinian mysteries of Greece, the Dionysian mysteries, or the Orgies of Bacchus, and the Christian mysteries of the sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ, which are absolutely not more different in any respect from each other, than the customs and forms of any Lodge of Freemasons in England may be from those of a Lodge in any of the nations of the Continent'. Carlile urged freemasons to attend Taylor's lectures, pointing out that they coincided with a quarterly communication. He attempted to hire Freemasons' Hall so that Taylor could repeat his lectures to a masonic audience. Taylor's lectures were printed in *The Devil's Pulpit*, and also issued separately. They continued to be read for many years afterwards. The copy of *The Devil's Pulpit* in the Library and Museum of Freemasonry was issued as late as 1881-1882 by the Freethought Press, run by Charles Bradlaugh and Annie Besant. Although the Library's copy of the separate issue of Taylor's Discourses on Freemasonry doesn't have a date or place of publication,

it looks as if it was also issued by Bradlaugh and Besant at about the same time.

To accompany Taylor's lectures, Carlile reissued the material from volume twelve of *The Republican* as a separate book, entitled *An Exposure of Freemasonry: or, a mason's printed manual, with an introductory Key-stone to the Royal Arch of Freemasonry*, considerably revising and refining his edition of the rituals. Anxious to stress the allegorical meaning of freemasonry, Carlile inserted new introductions, omitting the attacks on freemasonry itself and stressing its spiritual interest. As Carlile put it, 'My great object is here to instruct Masons as well as others, and not to give them offence. They ask for light. Here is light. They ask for fellowship. Here is the only basis of fellowship'. Carlile's aim was the same as Taylor's: to expose the ancient mysteries preserved in freemasonry. To quote Carlile again, 'the Key Stone of the Royal Arch of Freemasonry is the ancient science of the zodiac, with its moral counterpart of human culture made mysterious in its secret and priestly associations; which is also the science of all religions that pretend to revelations; and also of the religion of the Druids, and of all the Pagans from Hindostan to Rome'.

Carlile was also increasingly influenced by the researches of Godfrey Higgins, a retired soldier who settled in West Yorkshire and became an energetic social reformer. Higgins was a pioneering scholar of comparative religion, and sought again to demonstrate

that all religions derived from an ancient sun religion. Higgins became a mason to investigate the ritual of freemasonry for himself; though he refused to join the Royal Arch or Knights Templar for fear of compromising his scholarship. Carlile recalled a conversation with Higgins in which Higgins had said that there were only two masons in England - the Duke of Sussex and himself. Carlile responded that he and Taylor were the third and fourth (he afterwards dropped the reference to Taylor when they fell out).

In 1836, the Exposure was reissued by Carlile's son Alfred as *The Manual of Masonry*. The title *Manual of Freemasonry* was finally adopted when the work was first issued in a single volume in 1845. The Library and Museum of Freemasonry contains the most comprehensive collection in the country of the different editions of Carlile's work, and the introductions to the successive editions from an essential key to understanding the development of Carlile's thought. Carlile increasingly emphasised the moral allegory of freemasonry, as well as its importance in understanding the history of religion. This played an important part in the development of Carlile's later view of the Bible, as an allegory of the creation of man's intellect. In his later years, Carlile began to see all religion as the story of the struggle of the good man to communicate knowledge. From this, it was a short step for Carlile to identify himself with Christ, Mohammed or Buddha: a man

whose great struggle in life had been to communicate knowledge to others.

Carlile and Taylor suffered further long periods of imprisonment, and were eventually unable to keep the Rotunda going. Carlile, disappointed by Taylor's self-pitying behaviour in prison, fell out with him. Carlile's marriage also finally broke up, and Carlile entered on a 'moral marriage' with one of his supporters, declaring that reform should begin at home and that amicable separations should be permitted. Carlile's views of marriage, and his advocacy of birth control, alienated some of his supporters; further divisions were created by Carlile's views on trade unions. Carlile's reasons for opposing trade unions were closely linked to his views on freemasonry. Carlile had a long-standing antipathy to political associations of any kind, declaring that 'they are a field for noisy and worthless men to declaim in' and stating that 'nine out of ten of all the associations of the country are arrangements for the profit of a public house...' But stories of the use of initiation rituals and secret oaths by trade unions horrified Carlile. 'There is one thing very desirable to be done at once for and by these trades' unions', he wrote, 'and that is to break up their secret character, their oaths and ceremonial nonsense.' When the Tolpuddle Martyrs were arrested for carrying out such an initiation, Carlile ran a caricature of the ceremonies on the front page of his periodical, *The Gauntlet*. 'A greater piece of quackery has never been played off upon mankind', he thundered. To the

Tolpuddle men, he declared: 'You have degraded yourselves. I present you today with a picture of your degradation.' If you want nonsense, said Carlile, why pay more when you could buy his exposure of freemasonry for five shillings?

Through the difficult struggles of his last years, the main thread which ran through Carlile's life was his *Manual of Freemasonry*. One aspect of the publication of the Manual illustrates how Carlile was concerned to keep it in print. Like many reformers of his generation, Carlile was anxious to emphasise his moral respectability. The borderline between the blasphemy of which Carlile was accused in printing Paine and obscenity through pornographic publication was a fine one. Some radical printers felt that freedom of the press meant freedom to publish pornography as well. Thus one radical printer William Dugdale not only printed Shelley's banned poem *Queen Mab*, but was also one of London's leading pornographers. Carlile felt such activities were disreputable, and fell out with his sons when they worked with Dugdale. Nevertheless, towards the end of Carlile's life, the *Manual of Freemasonry* was printed by Dugdale. It seems that Carlile may have been sufficiently anxious to ensure that the Manual stayed in print, that he was willing to countenance its publication by a printer of whom he disapproved.

Although Carlile's *Manual* was bought by many masons, its impact on freemasonry was apparently limited. Carlile

reported that a secretary of a London lodge had told him that all the signs and passwords were changed because of his exposure, but there is no evidence that this happened. Carlile also claimed that his publications had led to the formation of the Anti-Masonic Party in the United States following the murder of William Morgan, but again there is no evidence to show that Carlile's publications had much influence on events in America. Shortly after the *Manual* was reissued in book form by Carlile, George Claret began printing masonic ritual, a process which led eventually to the emergence of the modern official ritual books. Carlile's work may have encouraged Claret to proceed, but the publications of, for example, William Finch had already paved the way for this work. Similarly, the appearance of the *Freemason's Quarterly Review* in 1834 may have been partly prompted by a feeling that institutional freemasonry should also make use of the power of the press, but this is only tangentially connected with Carlile.

The real interest of Carlile's work on freemasonry lies in the way it offers new perspectives on the radical tradition in Britain. It is difficult to find strong lines of continuity in British radical thought, but an interest in freemasonry appears to be one such thread, which has been largely neglected. This interest began with Paine and his essay on freemasonry, but it is also evident in the work, for example, of William Hone and George Cruickshank, who made liberal use of masonic symbolism in their satirical publications. From Paine, there is a link through Carlile

to the modern secularist movement. Carlile was very close to George Jacob Holyoake, who was imprisoned for blasphemy because he opposed the use of public money to build churches. Holyoake was very interested in the Oddfellows, and, to the outrage of the Oddfellows, won a competition for composing new lectures for use in Oddfellow ceremonies. Holyoake's interest in freemasonry is apparent from his proposal that the London secular guild should be a 'freemasonry in freethought'. When the young freethinker Charles Bradlaugh was thrown out of his home, Carlile offered him lodgings. Bradlaugh was to become an active freemason, joining a craft lodge in Tottenham, and resigning in protest at the appointment of the Prince of Wales as Grand Master. Bradlaugh was, of course, closely associated with Annie Besant who introduced co-Masonry into England. In 1896, Moncur Conway, an associate of Bradlaugh and Besant, produced the modern edition of Paine's Essay on Freemasonry, thus bringing the wheel full circle. Conway Hall in Theobald's Road was named after Moncur Conway, and Conway Hall, with its Sunday morning rationalist lectures, may be regarded as the modern descendant of Carlile and Taylor's Rotunda.

At first sight, Carlile's career is very difficult to sum up, but there is one strong thread running through it which can be easily overlooked. Carlile's passion was the written word and the printed book. Like all his generation of working class publishers and pamphleteers,

he was intoxicated by the power of the printing press. This is nowhere better expressed than in one of his letters to George IV printed in *The Republican*, with which I would like to end:

Sir,
When the art of printing was discovered, there arose, on the part of those who ruled the people of Europe, a great dread of printed books. The first book submitted to the press was the bible, and a printed Bible then had precisely the same or a more terrifying effect, than the printed investigation of the Bible called the 'Age of Reason'...

I counsel you to throw off all dread of printed books and to send out a flaming proclamation, inviting all to free discussion, upon all subjects. We shall then hear nothing but the cry of 'God Bless the King: we have gotten a wise king at last'.

I am, Sir, your prisoner,

For printing books,

Richard Carlile.'

Further Reading

This lecture is heavily reliant on the excellent biography of Carlile by Joel H. Wiener, *Radicalism and*

Freethought in nineteenth-century Britain: the Life of Richard Carlile, Contributions in labor history no. 13 (Westport, Conn, and London: Greenwood Press, 1983). Wiener is unusual among labour historians in that he gives full weight to Carlile's interest in freemasonry. Prior to Wiener's full treatment, the best biography of Carlile available was the anniversary publication by G.D.H. Cole, *Richard Carlile, 1790-1843*, Fabian Biographical Series, no. 13 (London: Victor Gollancz and Fabian Society, no. 13, 1943). The biography by Guy Aldred, *Richard Carlile, Agitator: his life and times* (London: Pioneer Press, 1923) is a hagiographical exercise by a writer operating very much in Carlile's own tradition. All modern writers on Carlile have overlooked the important article by masonic historian S. J. Fenton, 'Richard Carlile: His Life and Masonic Writings', *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum* 49 (1952), pp. 83-121, where Fenton achieved the extraordinary feat of talking to a masonic lodge about Carlile while also, in the words of one member of the lodge, 'steering his course so as to avoid the Scylla and Chrybdis of Religion and Politics'. Fenton's article includes a detailed bibliography of Carlile's writings on freemasonry, with a full listing of different editions of the *Manual*. A large selection of Carlile's papers are in the Huntington Library, San Marino, California, and I am grateful to the Curator of Manuscripts there for providing me with microfilms of them. The Home Office files in the Public Record Office (particularly the HO 42 class) naturally contain a great deal of material about Carlile.

On Robert Taylor, see I.D. McCalman, 'Popular Irreligion in early Victorian England: infidel preachers and radical theatricality in 1830s London' in *Religion and Irreligion in Victorian Society: Essays in Honour of R.K. Webb*, ed. R. W. Davis and R. J. Helmstadter (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 51-67. McCalman's works are helpful in placing Carlile in the context of radical activity generally; see particularly: *Radical Underworld: prophets, revolutionaries and pornographers in London, 1795-1840* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988); 'Ultra-radicalism and convivial debating-clubs in London, 1795-1838', *English Historical Review* 102 (1987), pp. 309-333; 'Unrespectable Radicalism: Infidels and Pornography in early nineteenth-century London', *Past and Present* 104 (1984), pp. 74-110. Other important works placing Carlile in the context of the infidel and republican tradition are: Joss Marsh *Word Crimes: blasphemy, culture, and literature in nineteenth-century England* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Frank Prochaska, *The Republic of Britain 1760-2000* (London: Allen Lane, 2000); Edward Royle, *Radical politics, 1790-1900. Religion and unbelief* (London: Longman, 1971); idem, *Victorian infidels: the origins of the British Secularist Movement, 1791-1866* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1974); Edward Royle and James Walvin, *English Radicals and Reformers 1760-1848* (Brighton: Harvester, 1982); *The*

infidel tradition : from Paine to Bradlaugh, edited by Edward Royle (London: Macmillan, 1976).

'The Spirit of Association': Freemasonry and Early Trade Unions

Lecture at the Canonbury Masonic Research Centre, 30 May 2001

In studying the social history of England in the early nineteenth century, it sometimes seems that every path leads to the name of Francis Place. Whether one is interested in education, economics, birth control or popular customs, the name of Place quickly crops up. Place was a tailor of Charing Cross who became a leading radical politician and a friend of Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill. He was an assiduous archivist, and left a huge collection of papers bearing on almost every aspect of early nineteenth century social history, which is now in the British Library. Place's greatest achievement was undoubtedly his role in the repeal of the mass of legislation, known as the Combination Acts, which restricted the rights of both employers and workers to form associations for the purposes of controlling and regulating working conditions. Place was largely responsible for organising the presentation of evidence to a select committee in 1824 which led to the successful passage of a bill repealing this legislation. He was equally energetic again in the following year in ensuring that a further select committee did not completely overturn this victory.

In 1834, Place recalled the effects of the combination laws, in the following words: 'Everything on the part of the workmen was done by stealth before the repeal of the Combination Laws, and in contravention to the laws, which were unjust and exceedingly severe; workmen could not meet openly to adjust any matter relating to their business. If a few met and wished to come to an understanding with the masters, they were prosecuted, not always under the Combination Laws, but at common law, and very severe sentences were passed upon them. The men had to a very great extent oaths of secrecy, all their discussions were secret, and this course of conduct demoralised them very much; it was a great impediment to their improvement, and did no good to the masters'.

Oaths tended to make parliamentary committees nervous, and it reflects Place's adroit handling of the witnesses before the 1824 and 1825 enquiries that the issue of the use of oaths and initiation rituals by workmen's groups does not loom very large in the evidence taken by these committees. The most substantial discussion occurred as a result of evidence given by Alexander Guthrie, the manager of the Duke of Portland's collieries in Ayrshire. Guthrie said that an association of colliers had been formed, which required its members to swear an oath and used passwords and secret signs. He repeated the oath which was as follows: 'I do solemnly swear, before God and those who trow, that I will haill, conceal, and never reveal this secret of word, sign and grip; that I will not write it, cut or carve, print it or engrave it, mark or stain

it, upon anything that will bear a mark, or the meaning of a letter; and I will always assist a brother collier in anything I can help him in, if consistent with my own safety; and I will assist the Glasgow Clydesdale Operative Brethren, if consistent with reason, equity and justice, and consistent with the laws of my country; and that I will not make, or see any made, under the number Three, and not then until represented with a good moral character. Now, as I have sworn, may the Lord enable me to perform this my obligation'.

Guthrie said that the password then in use was 'Mizpah', and described the grips used by the colliers: 'The signs are to touch the right ear with the right thumb and forefinger, and answered by the other person putting down his right hand by his left side, in allusion to Malchus's ear being cut off, and Jesus enjoining Peter to put up his sword. The grips formerly used were few in number, called Clerk the Boards or shovel, the pick, the wedge and the mell; but of late a new one has been formed, called the reversed sign, which is done by the one person putting up the right hand middle finger, while the other holds his hand out and right middle finger down.'

This was the kind of evidence which was potentially dangerous to those advocating repeal of the Combination Laws, and one can sense Francis Place working frantically behind the scenes to secure the appearance before the committee of William McAllister, a worker

from the Kilmarnock Coal Works, who was able to put the information provided by Guthrie in a completely different light. McAllister denied that the miners' association had any secret bye laws and regulations, and said that oaths were not used. He was asked if any secret signs were used for recognition. He replied 'Yes but that does not belong to this association'. McAllister was asked what organisation used the signs. He said that they were to do with 'the Brotherhood of the Colliery, that has nothing to do with this association'. I will quote the evidence verbatim:

'What is the Nature of the Brotherhood of the Colliery?
It is the same as freemasonry.
How far does it extend? It extends just among the colliers themselves.
What is the intention of it? Just to make them friendly and true to each other.
Has it anything to do with striking? Nothing in the world.
Has it nothing to do with supporting one another in the case of a strike? No.
Of what number may the Brotherhood consist? It may consist of every collier in the world.

McAllister was shown the oath which had been produced by Guthrie, and declared that it was not the oath used by the Brotherhood. Unfortunately, McAllister felt that he could not repeat the true oath. He was asked again:

'Do you conceive it the same as free masonry? It is the same.

Are you a free mason? Yes', replied McAllister.

Thus McAllister sought to rebut Guthrie's charges by suggesting that the oaths and secret signs were connected, not with the trade union, but rather with a separate organisation whose purpose was purely social. Doubts may be felt about whether McAllister was being disingenuous in making this distinction. Firm lines of this sort were not always drawn in the early nineteenth century workplace. Place himself describes how he entered radical politics by becoming secretary of the Breeches Makers Benefit Society, a club which was ostensibly meant to support members when sick and bury them when dead, but which was really, in Place's words, 'intended for the purpose of supporting the members in a strike for wages'. Likewise, the Scottish colliers probably did not make as strong a distinction between their union and the brotherhood as McAllister suggested. This Brotherhood was apparently also found in England. Another witness refers to the prevalence among miners in North Shields of the system known as brothering: 'They bound themselves to obey the orders of the brotherhood at the peril of their lives, on the penalty of being stabbed through the heart, or their bowels ripped up'.

Place and his fellow radicals hoped that, once the Combination Laws were repealed, workers associations

would no longer feel the need for secret oaths and passwords, and would become respectable and progressive organisations, enabling workers to become a well-organised and sober part of a system of laissez-faire economics. However, the growth in popularity of trades unions in the 1820s and 1830s was accompanied by an upsurge in the use of oaths and ritual. Indeed, it may be that, far from prompting unions to abandon ceremonial and secrecy, the repeal of the Combination Laws made members of unions feel that they could safely adopt such proceedings. Raymond Postgate points out that the Society of Preston Joiners had carried on without any ritual from 1807 to 1833. In 1833, the Society purchased a 'Square and Compasses', and provided a subsidiary lodge at Kendal with regalia for the purposes of initiation. When the Society became part of the Operative Builders Union, there was further substantial expenditure on regalia as well as on the purchase of a new top coat, a cocked hat and false moustaches for the tyler. In forming the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union, the social visionary Robert Owen protested against the use of initiation ceremonies as 'relics of barbarism', but was persuaded that they were necessary as a 'temporary concession to ignorance'.

Another opponent of such ceremonial was the republican and atheist Richard Carlile, the chief populariser of the works of Thomas Paine. Carlile is, of course, known to masonic scholars for his *Manual of Freemasonry*, an exposure of freemasonry first published in Carlile's

journal *The Republican* while he was a prisoner in Dorchester gaol in 1825. In *The Republican*, Carlile had adopted a standard materialist criticism of masonic ritual as useless mummery, and had criticised masonic oaths as a potentially corrupting influence. His stance had subsequently shifted, however, and under the influence of both Paine and the pioneer of comparative religion Godfrey Higgins, Carlile had come to view masonic ritual as embodying remnants of the ancient pre-Christian sun religion. He was unable, however, to trace any such exalted origins for trade union ritual.

In December 1833, Carlile published in his journal *The Gauntlet* (subtitled 'A Sound Republican London Weekly Paper') a leading article on trades unions. Carlile could hardly disapprove of the unions, but he felt they were just a beginning, 'mere embryonic mental and physical struggles for a better state of human existence'. 'Though weak, crude, sickly and comparatively helpless in their birth', wrote Carlile, 'they will, under good care and proper education, grow up into a manhood capable of independence and determined to have a common justice in the social sphere'. However, there was something that Carlile felt required immediate attention: 'There is one thing very desirable to be done at once for and by these trades' unions', he wrote, 'and that is to break up their secret character, their oaths and ceremonial nonsense. Some little excitement was created on Monday, in consequence of the arrest, in the streets, of some persons, who late at night had in bags the

paraphernalia of a lodge, as the meetings of the unions are now called, in imitation of the Masonic, Orange, and Odd Fellows' mischief and nonsense. Two persons having the bags of the lodge were stopped by a policeman, demanding to know what they had got. The members of the union answered that it was no business of the policeman's. He took them to the station house. They gave the same answer to the inspector. He examined their bags, and the first thing presenting itself was a battle axe'. Carlile urged the unions to abandon these procedures; while they retained such ritual, he declared, 'they may be feared, but they will never be respected'. Carlile was to have occasion to return to this subject again over the next few months.

At the end of January 1834, Carlile visited Plymouth on a lecture tour. Carlile's own appearance - as a notorious infidel and radical - caused excitement enough, but while he was there events in Exeter caused an even greater stir. *The Gauntlet* carried the relevant report from the *Plymouth Herald*. The Exeter police had heard rumours that representatives of the Operative Builders' Union were actively recruiting in the area. They established that a meeting would be taking place on 15th January in the Sun Inn. The captain of the watch hid himself in a next door room, and made a hole in the wall so he could see what was going on. After about fifty men had gathered in the room, it was announced that a ceremony of initiation would take place. The captain immediately left his hiding place and rushed off to fetch reinforcements. After a

great struggle, the police managed to force their way into the room where the meeting was in progress. The lights were extinguished and a number of men escaped by jumping from the windows. Eventually, about forty men were arrested.

The *Herald* went on to describe what was found in the room: 'On the table in the room lay the Bible open, and a Testament, a manuscript book of proceedings, the oath of initiation, letters, papers, et cetera. There were also formed of wood, sundry representations of ancient battle axes, one of them with a double head, having a handle several feet in length, and two swords of the description formerly used by our light dragoons. Besides these were two masks appended to wigs or covers for the head, formed of sheep skin, with the wool outwards, somewhat after the manner of a judge's wig; and two flowing white garments after the manner of surplices. But the masterpiece in the way of the terrific, was a gaunt figure of Death, painted on canvas, of from six to seven feet in height; the right arm of the figure being raised above the head, and the hand furnished with a dart, with which it appears about to transfix the person standing before it; an inscription above having the words 'Remember Thy Latter End'. At the foot on one side, is an hour glass, and on the other the terrestrial globe'. At the time the police burst in, three men had been blindfolded.

The ceremony used was presumably similar to that in a manuscript dating from 1831 used by the Society of

Operative Stone Masons, a component part of the Operative Builders Union. There isn't time here to give a full description of the ritual, but, as Andy Durr has commented, although the oath was in a fairly simple form, 'there is no doubt that the ritual surrounding the obligation was meant to impress. The initiate was brought in blindfolded and went through a long ceremony, and when the blindfold was removed he was faced with the officers of the Lodge in regalia, one holding a gilded axe'. Carlile, as a result of his study of masonic ritual, had no doubt where the ceremony was derived from: 'It is a paltry imitation of masonic proceedings', he declared. He felt that the union members were 'making great fools of themselves'. Eventually fifteen of those arrested at Exeter were sent for trial on a charge of 'combining and confederating themselves together for the purpose of effecting an unlawful object'. They admitted their guilt at the assizes, and were bound over. This comparatively lenient treatment may have been due to events a few weeks later not far away in Dorset, which made the question of union oaths even more contentious.

In March 1834, six Dorsetshire farm labourers were tried at the Dorchester assizes for 'administering and causing to be administered, and aiding and assisting, at being present at, and consenting to administer, a certain unlawful oath and engagement'. The labourers had formed an 'Agricultural Friendly Society' which involved an initiation rite, described by one of the witnesses

against them: 'One of the prisoners asked if we were ready to have our eyes blindfolded; we said 'Yes'; we then (all five of us) bound our handkerchiefs round our eyes; we were then led by a person through a passage into another room, on the same floor; on getting into that room a paper was read to us, but I do not recollect any of the words that were read; after the paper had been read we knelt down on being desired to do so; something else was then read to us; the voice which read appeared to be the same; I don't know what the reading was about; but I think it was from some part of the Bible; we then got up, turned ourselves around and took the bandage from our eyes being desired to do so; a light was in the room; I saw in a corner of the room something (a picture, I think) which had the appearance of a skeleton; on looking at that picture James Loveless said, 'Remember Your End'. We were then desired to blind our eyes again and to kneel down; the same voice read again something which I don't remember; we were afterwards desired to kiss a book; our eyes were then unblinded; I then saw all the prisoners present; some of them were sitting, some standing; James Loveless had then a different dress from what he now has on...' The witness was asked in cross-examination whether he had ever been an oddfellow or a freemason, which he denied.

The prisoners were, of course, the Tolpuddle Martyrs, whose actions in carrying out this initiation and administering this oath was to earn them a sentence of seven years transportation to Australia. The sentence

unleashed a storm of protest, which in the end resulted in the labourers receiving pardons after they had been in Australia for nearly two years. As Richard Carlile observed, the case 'all turned upon the oath making'. Some radical journals tried to make light of this, one even denying that an oath had been administered, but for Carlile it confirmed his suspicions of the trade unions - 'a greater piece of quackery has never been played off upon mankind', he declared, and the last issue of the *Gauntlet* had on the front page a grotesque engraving of the initiation, with a blunt declaration by Carlile: 'You have degraded yourselves. I present you today with a picture of your degradation. Some men learn better by pictures than by letters'. If you want nonsense, said Carlile, why pay more when you could buy his exposure of freemasonry for five shillings?

In setting up research centres into freemasonry, such as the centre here at Canonbury or the new Centre at Sheffield, I and others have naturally emphasised the lack of attention paid to the history of freemasonry by professional scholars in England. However, one can easily exaggerate the situation and give the impression that professional historians have ignored freemasonry altogether, which is not the case. Particularly striking is the way in which interesting and suggestive references to freemasonry are made by historians of the left, such as Eric Hobsbawm, E. P. Thompson, Gwyn Williams, Raymond Postgate, and Raphael Samuel. These allusions

to freemasonry point towards themes and connections which certainly deserve closer investigation.

In looking for interesting starting points on the history of freemasonry, one would not expect to turn to such classic works of left wing historiography as Sidney and Beatrice Webb's *History of Trade Unionism* or Raymond Postgate's *The Builders' History*, but the issue of the use of ritual by trade unions means that freemasonry is discussed early in these volumes, and its treatment is interesting. The Webbs had a profound effect on the study of early trade union history by their insistence that there was no connection between trade unions and the medieval guilds. The Webbs' outlook is summarised by the following quote: 'We assert with some confidence that in no case did any trade union in the United Kingdom arise either directly or indirectly by descent from a craft guild'. This conclusion partly reflected the way in which the Webbs defined trade unions. According to the Webbs, true trade unions were 'continuous associations' and the early bodies were, in their opinion, more ephemeral, so that they were, by definition, not trade unions. The Webbs stated that trade unions first appeared in the late seventeenth century, and until recently, few disagreed with this view. The parallels with the way in which, by similar manipulation of definitions, the history of freemasonry has also been taken by many English masonic scholars to begin in the late seventeenth century are very striking.

The reason for the Webbs insistence on the late emergence of trades unions was that their work was first published when the new unions, with their mass semi-skilled and unskilled membership, were beginning to displace the older craft-based unions. The Webbs were anxious to support the new unions, with their emphasis on greater political action, and did not wish to emphasise the older roots of union activity. The oaths and rituals of trade unions in the 1820s and 1830s were worryingly suggestive of a medieval tradition, and it suited the Webbs' purpose to suggest that they might have been an import from an exotic institution from freemasonry. As Robert Leeson has put it, 'The Webbs, unwilling to accept the direct transmission of craft traditions, argued that early union 'ritual and regalia' was borrowed from the 'small friendly societies' around them...they tried to prove that the Operative Builders Union in 1834 took its clearly building trade ritual from the Leeds Woolcombers, who got it from the Rochdale Flannel Weavers, who got it from the Oddfellows' Friendly Society, who borrowed it from the Freemasons'.

While historians of trade unions have, for their own reasons, been quick to suggest links between early trade union ritual and freemasonry, masonic scholars have been less interested. With the exception of an article by B. Springett in *The Freemason* in 1925, the subject was largely neglected by masonic scholars until 1987, when Andy Durr finally gave the subject its proper due in a wonderful article in *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum*, entitled

'Ritual of Association and Organisations of the Common People'. This article gives a comprehensive overview of the use of rituals among union movements. Durr emphasises how ritual has proved a much more tenacious feature of union life than many labour historians have been willing to admit. He points out that the boilermakers and blacksmiths were still using ritual initiation at the beginning of the twentieth century, and notes that in 1963, when the boilermakers, blacksmiths and shipwrights formed a new union, they issued a new ritual book, which was still in use in 1987. Durr also emphasises the link between the use of ritual in unions and the practices of friendly societies such as the Oddfellows, Ancient Order of Druids and the Free Gardeners. Durr's article is a major contribution to the history of trade unions. It is sometimes lamented that articles in AQC are not used by historians, but Durr's article shows how, if an article in AQC addresses problems in which historians are interested, it will be used and cited by them - Durr's article duly receives pride of place in the bibliography of Malcolm Chase's recent monograph on *Early Trade Unionism*.

Despite the importance of Durr's article, it is striking that masons only seem to have remembered the possible links with the unions at a time when freemasonry was in trouble - Durr's article is framed explicitly in terms of developing a response to the publication of Stephen Knight's book *The Brotherhood*. Moreover, although historians of freemasonry, friendly societies and trade

unions have all noticed the parallels between their different rituals, little attention has been paid to the interaction between these different organisations and the effect it had on them. How did freemasons feel when they heard about the Tolpuddle Martyrs using forms of oath which reflected, however distantly, masonic forms? And what effect did this reaction have on both organisations?

Although freemasons today may be happy to note the links with trade unions and friendly societies, this was by no means the case in the nineteenth century. A letter from the archives at Great Queen Street illustrates the kind of tensions which might arise. The institution of the tramp dates back perhaps to the middle ages. Artisans who were out of work would undertake on foot a tour of towns. Their fellow craftsmen would give them work if there was any available. If not, the tramp would receive food, money and a bed for the night. One of the major functions of trade unions was the organisation of this system, which in the first half of the nineteenth century achieved its most elaborate form, with a system of designated houses of call and elaborate printed passport-like documents issued to travelling members to record their journeys. (Many of the Masons' Arms pub names which still survive derive, not from connections with freemasons, but because they were houses of call for operative stonemasons on the tramp). Benefits to tramps were not only dispensed by craft organisations. Friendly

societies like the Oddfellows also offered relief to travelling members.

In 1816, Charles Whiteley, a freemason who held provincial office in Lancashire, wrote to the Grand Secretary in London to express his concern about help given to tramps who were freemasons. He wrote that 'Of late we have had many applications from tramps for relief, and some only recently initiated who considered they had a right to relief as they pretended they were seeking work'. Whiteley was worried that some of these men were active unionists, and expressed his anxiety that 'should it be known that these people are masons it will be considered that the craft are supporters of illegal combinations among workmen'. Whiteley illustrated the sort of abuse he was worried about by describing a conversation he had had with a tramp who recently called at his factory. 'I recollected having seen him some six months before on the same errand. He informed me that he had travelled since the time he was here before nearly all over this kingdom, also Ireland and part of Scotland, and had saved money by it. As he was an Orangeman and an Odd Fellow he had been relieved by them and he meant to be made a mason when he got home which was in the neighbourhood of Stockport'. Whiteley's letter expresses a concern to distinguish freemasonry from mere friendly societies and, above all, from trade unions, which was a common feeling among freemasons during the first half of the nineteenth century, and was to have

important repercussions on all sides right up to the present day.

In understanding the relationship between freemasonry, friendly societies and trade unions in the nineteenth century, the key text is the Unlawful Societies Act of 1799, about which some of you may have heard me speak at the Canonbury conference last year. This act was one of the various measures introduced by Pitt's government to stifle the threat of revolution in the wake of events in France. The 1799 act was a direct response to the activities of such revolutionary bodies as the United Irishmen and the Corresponding Societies. The Unlawful Societies Act outlawed bodies which administered unlawful oaths (as defined in an earlier act of 1797). It also outlawed organisations which held closed meetings and were organised into branches with national committees. Membership of such bodies was punishable with seven years transportation. The only people excepted from this law were the freemasons. The exemption for the freemasons had been hurriedly agreed at committee stage, and an original proposal for regulation by the grand lodges had been overturned in the House of Lords, to be replaced with a system requiring registration of lodges with the clerk of the peace. The 1799 Act entered the statute book on 12 July, the same day as the notorious Combination Act, which facilitated summary procedure against trades unions. It seems that this was purely coincidental, but it nevertheless presaged

the significant role the 1799 act was to play in the history of working class organisations.

The exemption for freemasons under the 1799 act created a gulf between freemasonry and other analogous organisations. The Grand Lodges in England and Scotland were able to use the 1799 act to tighten their control over the organisation of freemasonry, so that in Scotland the act was used to eradicate the royal arch and higher degrees, and an unsuccessful attempt was made to wipe out Lodge Mother Kilwinning. The 1799 act was thus within freemasonry a force for centralisation. By contrast, for organisations which fell outside the scope of the 1799 act, the act temporarily wiped out any national organisation and made it difficult to continue with the working of ritual. This was a problem even where organisations were specifically permitted by other legislation, such as friendly societies. The Oddfellows were the first to discover this. In June 1799, the United Order of Odd Fellows submitted their 'general laws' for scrutiny to the Home Office. The Home Office sought systematically to open up meetings and remove much of the ritual. For example, the second clause ordered that 'the Noble Grand examine every stranger that shall go to the lodge room at the time the lodge is opened; and after the lodge is opened, the guardian shall demand the word, or sign, from any stranger who wishes to be admitted'. The Home Office officials simply struck this through as unacceptable. The rule stating that any brother who revealed the secrets of the order would be expelled was

similarly struck down. The word 'making' was changed to 'admission' throughout, and references to the use of oaths removed.

The 1799 act was remembered in the traditions of oddfellowship as devastating the national organisation. R. Moffrey in his *Century of Oddfellowship* declared that 'So stringent was the administration of this act through the medium of spies and common informers that the frail ties which bound the branches to the Grand Lodges were severed, records destroyed, and all traces of the lodges as branches of their order were lost'. Moffrey saw the attack on ritual as particularly lamentable 'and hence we have lost, except as a literary fact, one of the most impressive modes of educating grown men'. Other friendly societies apparently suffered in a similar way. In 1823, a magistrate at Chelmsford expressed concern about the activities of the Druids in the area, and the Home Office advised that proceedings should be taken against them under the 1799 Act (which had been reissued in 1817). Progressive splits in the Druids from 1800 were probably due to anxiety about the illegality of the unregistered society

The 1799 legislation also created difficulties for the Orange order in England. This spread from Ireland by means of military lodges, and in England seems to have functioned at first very much as a protestant friendly society. When a query was raised about the existence of an Orange lodge among members of the West York

militia, the commanding officer wrote that 'The Lodge has existed for ten years in this regiment; it is a society of loyal and philanthropic tendency like free masonry. There are, I understand, similar lodges held in many regiments and most towns of the kingdom'. Nevertheless, when the head of the London Orange Orders applied for a military commission and mentioned his membership of the order, it was pointed out to him by the Home Office that 'it being considered that oaths are administered to members of Orange Societies, it is thought right that he should be informed that all such oaths are illegal.' Under the terms of the 1799 act, members of Orange lodges were, declared the Home Secretary, 'liable to imprisonment and transportation.'

Although there were numerous prosecutions under the combination laws prior to 1824, the 1799 legislation, with its sanctions against oaths and the formation of societies with different branches, also provided a weapon against the unions, and was used where the government and local magistrates were apprehensive that union activities might be linked to radical protests. In 1802, a member of a shearman's club in Yorkshire was prosecuted for swearing an oath 'to be true to the shearmen, and to see that none of them are hurt, and not to divulge any of their secrets'. In 1804, a prosecution was brought by the Master Boot and Shoe Makers in London against the association of journeymen boot and shoe makers under the terms of 1799 act, on the grounds that, as a body with elected officials, the society was

illegal. Fundamentally, the Combination Laws seem to have been regarded as suitable for dealing with small local associations, but the 1799 legislation was preferred where there was any suggestion of a large organisation, with branches and elected committees. This is evident from an opinion given by the Treasury Solicitor in 1811 concerning a combination of framework knitters in the Midlands: 'the meetings alluded to...are not within the purview of the Act 39 George III, chapter 79, although they are not prepared to say that they may not be brought within the words of it. They think the attention of the magistrates should be called to 39 George III, chapter 81, expressly made for the suppression of combinations of workmen...

With the repeal of the Combination Laws, the 1799 act, as restated and refined in 1817, was nevertheless left on the statute book, and still offered a powerful weapon against the formation of larger unions. The 1799 act, in outlawing secret oaths, referred back to piece of legislation two years previously which made it a felony to administer an oath binding a person not to reveal an unlawful confederacy. It was the 1797 and 1799 statutes which were used against the Tolpuddle Martyrs. The Tolpuddle Martyrs themselves were, of course, unaware that their actions were illegal; as far as they were concerned, the Combination Laws had been repealed. Consequently, it is usually suggested that they were prosecuted as a result of a vindictive government, prompted by a vicious magistrate, remembering a half-

forgotten piece of legislation, but this is far from being the case - in proceeding down this route against the Dorchester labourers, the law officers were following a path against trade unions which had been well worn since 1799.

The implications of the use of the 1799 legislation against the Tolpuddle Martyrs were not lost on other organisations affected by its terms. The only organisation with an exemption from the 1799 act were the freemasons, although this had been extended in 1817 to cover meetings of Quakers as well. The exemption for the freemasons was dependent on lodges regularly submitting returns of their membership to the clerk of the peace. As soon as news of events in Dorset broke, United Grand Lodge in England moved quickly to ensure that all lodges were duly registered. The Grand Master at that time, the Duke of Sussex, was suffering from cataracts, and had been excused attendance from court. Nevertheless, he went out of his way to attend a Grand Festival on 30th April 1834 to comment on the situation. The Freemasons Quarterly Review reported his speech as follows: 'In consequence of late events, I have deemed it advisable, by a circular to the master of every lodge, to call the attention of the craft to that Act of George III which protects the assemblies of masons, and directs that the number and place of meeting of every lodge should be left with the Clerk of the Peace. That complied with, masons are exempt from all interference by the statutes which have been enacted for the suppression of secret

societies. In this proceeding, I have been actuated by a desire to preserve a due obedience to the laws by which the order has been protected and supported, and extend the respectability and high character of the craft.'

In proposing a toast to the Duke, Lord Durham made an interesting allusion to the use of ritual by the unions: 'Let those who had borrowed the language of their societies from the craft, imitate their love of order, their obedience to the laws, and ever peaceable conduct; and neither of the parties would regret, the mason, that his precepts had been copied, or the communities that had followed such pure examples'. The seriousness with which United Grand Lodge viewed the need to protect its legal exemption is apparent from the urgent language of the circular, which required lodges to register with the Clerk of the Peace immediately on receipt of the circular, and to inform United Grand Lodge immediately they had done so.

One of the chief supporters of the Tolpuddle Martyrs was Henry Hetherington, whose journal *The Poor Man's Guardian* played the leading role in the campaign for their pardon. Hetherington, like others, had been quick to point out that oaths and ritual were not limited to trade unionists: 'Combination is practiced by all classes', he wrote, 'and, as to oath administering, it is usual with the Freemasons, the Oddfellows, the Orangemen of Ireland, and various other societies'. On 24 May, the Poor Man's Guardian reported the receipt by a masonic lodge in Bury

of the Duke of Sussex's circular instructing lodges to register with the Clerk of the Peace. Hetherington reported rumours that the circular was intended as a step towards 'the putting down of all spurious lodges, whether of trade unions or secret societies'. This gave Hetherington the occasion for a lively editorial accusing the freemasons of seeking to protect their own position by supporting despotic acts and declaring that the unions would never submit to any attempt to outlaw them. Hetherington suspected that the masonic circular presaged legislation from the government which would extend its powers to suppress societies. His fears were probably exaggerated, but it is possible that the Duke of Sussex, in issuing the circular, may have been anticipating a campaign of prosecutions under the 1799 act to suppress closed societies.

If the prosecution of the Tolpuddle Martyrs created alarms for the freemasons, it was even more disconcerting for the Oddfellows, who were mentioned in the press as an example of a body administering oaths as frequently as the masons, but who, unlike the masons, enjoyed no legal protection. From about 1810, the Oddfellows had begun gradually to reestablish a national form of organisation with the rise of the Manchester Unity, although this was constantly subject to splits and schisms. The Oddfellows sought to demonstrate their respectability by extravagant protestations of loyalty, matching United Grand Lodge in their assiduousness in making loyal addresses to the throne. At the time of the

trial of the Tolpuddle Martyrs, the Annual Moveable Committee of the Manchester Unity was meeting at Hull, and the trial seems to have produced something of a panic among the Oddfellows. According to the *Manual of Oddfellowship*, 'such was the terror produced by the result of the trial, that the Directors resolved to abandon the system previously existing, and destroy every vestige [of ceremony] that could be construed into anything likely to compromise the order. The effect of English legislation did not extend to the United States, and therefore the American Independent Order was able to retain the ritual...' All the degrees which had been gradually reintroduced since 1799 were abolished, and replaced with much simpler lectures.

The trial of the Tolpuddle Martyrs caused similar alarm in the British Orange movement. The question of the legal status of the Orange organisation was discussed at a meeting of Grand Lodge in June 1834, but the Orangemen believed they were on reasonably safe ground, since they administered no oath as such, but instead required members to take an oath of allegiance and supremacy before a magistrate. Nevertheless, they took the precaution of ordering a new edition of the rules to be printed in which minor alterations were made better to secure their legality. Notwithstanding these actions, the Orange movement in England, of which the Duke of Cumberland was Grand Master, was about to run into increasing difficulties. Many were alarmed by the possibility that Victoria could accede to the throne while

still a minor so that the country would be governed by a regent such as the Duke of Wellington. There were persistent rumours that the Duke of Cumberland intended to use the Orangemen to stage a coup to prevent this happening. The existence of many regimental lodges encouraged fears that the Orange order could carry out a military coup. In 1835, there was a parliamentary inquiry into Orangeism. Under pressure in the House of Commons to take action, the government asked royal permission to use the 1799 legislation against the Orange order. William IV indicated that he would support such action, whereupon, at the end of February 1836, the Duke of Cumberland dissolved all the Orange lodges in England.

It was the proceedings against the Orange Order which provided the means of reopening the case of the Tolpuddle Martyrs. At the time of the dissolution of the Orange lodges, Sir William Molesworth made a speech in parliament pointing out that the Dorsetshire labourers had been condemned for a far more innocent act. The difference was that their chief, unlike the Orangemen, had not been a prince of the blood. In a letter to the Prime Minister, Lord Melbourne, the Home Secretary, Lord John Russell, admitted that 'To be sure the Duke of Cumberland and the Duke of Gordon are far more guilty than the labourers, but the law does not reach them, I fear'. The labourers were pardoned shortly afterwards.

The Webbs assumed that the case of the Tolpuddle Martyrs marked the end of the use of ceremonies of initiation by unions. Andy Durr has illustrated how the use of such ritual proved much more long-lived, and has still not completely died out. The union rituals were, however, constantly subject to attack and attrition in the face of legislative pressures and the concern of Victorian union leaders to emphasise their respectability. Unions constantly either abolished or simplified the ritual. In 1838, in response to a further parliamentary inquiry into trades unions as a result of criminal activity attributed to the Glasgow cotton-spinners, the Friendly Society of Operative Masons proposed to abandon all initiations, oaths and regalia. They did so officially, but unofficial initiations on building scaffolds continued into the twentieth century. Andy Durr also cites the example of the way in which the legend of King Solomon's smith was still read to new members of the blacksmith's union until the late nineteenth century. A similar process of simplification and attrition of ritual is also evident in friendly societies such as the Oddfellows.

The comparisons between trade unions, friendly societies and freemasonry is not confined to the use of ritual. The importance of the tramping system has already been mentioned and it is clear that relief of this kind was available for freemasons in the early part of the nineteenth century. It would be interesting to establish how far the increasing bureaucratisation of masonic charity in England - and the development in England of

such customs as the need for an invitation before visiting a lodge - were an attempt to distance freemasonry from the tramping system. Another common feature was the use of elaborate processions as the chief public face of the various associations. The importance of processions as a central function of freemasonry has now largely been forgotten, but until the 1920s, they formed a major social focus of freemasonry. Friendly society and trade union processions are better known, but trade union funerals have long been a thing of the past. In the 1830s, however, they were an important means of recruitment. One union organiser reckoned that, after a big funeral procession, recruitment could increase four-fold.

The question that remains is: were these components in early trade unions and friendly societies borrowed ultimately from freemasonry, as the Webbs believed, or did they stem from a common source? It is possible that this is a question that can never be answered. Those who have considered it hitherto have perhaps underestimated the impact of the 1799 Unlawful Societies Act on the use of ritual in friendly societies and trade unions. It is clear in the case of the Oddfellows that a great deal of their eighteenth century practices vanished after 1799. A similar process probably happened with trade unions. When ritual began to be more widely reinstated after the end of the Napoleonic Wars, it may have been necessary to develop new rituals, drawn from masonic sources. Moreover, ritual appears to have been subject to a constant process of simplification, partly as a result of

the need to avoid legal difficulties. Over and above this, there would have been many complex cross-currents of borrowing and imitation, which are difficult to reconstruct. Nevertheless, I would suggest that enough survives to indicate that not all trade union ritual derives from masonic sources. The ceremonies and mythology associated with the chapels of the print shop, for example, appear to date back to at least the sixteenth century. Andy Durr prints a ritual associated with a society of horse traders which dates back perhaps to the late seventeenth century and does not seem to be derived from freemasonry.

Modern trade union historians such as Malcolm Chase and Robert Leeson, who are not subject to the same political imperatives as the Webbs, have emphasised how the roots of craft ritual probably lie quite deep. Malcolm Chase in particular has recently stated that 'the roots of trade union ritualism lay deep: it was no superficial borrowing from masonic or friendly society sources, but rather a common legacy that continued to bind all three mutualist (and still sometimes overlapping movements).' This reappraisal of the importance of ritual within the history of the trade unions reflects a reassessment by historians of the relationship between trade unionism and the associational culture of the medieval and early modern town.

At one level, the nature of the guilds and their possible links with the trade unions has been subject to radical

reconsideration by historians. It has been pointed out that there are similarities of interest between guilds and early trade unions. An important preoccupation of each, for example, was the regulation of admission into apprenticeship. The old assumption that the guilds gradually faded away after the reformation has been challenged, and their flexibility and vibrancy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries has been emphasised. However, the guilds were subject to both internal and external pressure at this time. The reign of James II saw a complete reorganisation of the London guilds, for example, while at the same time journeymen were breaking away from the older guilds to form bodies that acted in many respects like proto-trades unions. Moreover, the highly legalistic view of guilds which was emphasised by Victorian historians who saw towns chiefly as jurisdictional units has been challenged, and replaced with a picture of guilds as just one of hundreds of different types of fraternal institutions in towns. This reassessment of the guilds has also shown how, even in the medieval period, it is not adequate to see the craft guilds as the chief associational bodies of town life - they formed part of a wide range of fraternities and clubs, which define easy categorisation.

The Webbs wrote that, where they expected to find an economic thread for a treatise, they found a spiders web. This sense of a web of associational bodies and relationships, stretching right back to the medieval period, is even stronger in modern studies of trade union

history. Modern historians of trade unions emphasise continuities, but in doing so they do not suggest single lines of descent. The picture that emerges is of a wide range of associational bodies, from guilds to journeyman's clubs, box clubs and drinking clubs, overlapping and constantly generating new forms of association, from which modern trade unions gradually emerge. Raymond Postgate, in discussing the Operative Stone Masons, declared that 'Freemasonry is the legitimate child of the forbidden covines and chapters...true operative masonry remained with the journeymen and the existing union and not the freemasonry is the real inheritor of the medieval guild'. Such attempts to establish a kind of family tree are doomed to failure in the context of the constantly fluctuating and overlapping associational world of the late medieval and early modern town.

A more fruitful approach is probably that adopted by Mary Ann Clawson in her important study of freemasonry *Constructing Brotherhood: Class, Gender and Fraternalism*. Clawson points out that journeyman's organisations, freemasonry, American labour organisations such as the Knights of Labour and even (in its earliest incarnation) the Klu Klux Klan are all types of fraternal organisation, characterised in a remarkably consistent form by a shared corporate mythology, ritual, proprietorship and masculinity. Clawson suggests that, rather than trying to trace lineal connections between these organisations, it is more appropriate to apply such

sociological theories as resource mobilisation, that is, to see fraternalism as a means by which particularly groups and social classes were able to express common interests and achieve particular social aims.

Within this context, the most pressing question is perhaps not whether freemasonry, trade unions and friendly societies share common roots, but rather, how did freemasonry come to see itself as particularly distinctive and draw apart from its siblings? The process was a complex one, but one component which has been overlooked is the way in which freemasonry's successful attempts to protect itself from the effects of the legislation passed in 1799 placed it apart from friendly societies and trade unions. Although the rituals in freemasonry were subject to change, particularly at the time of the union, freemasonry remained protected from the ferocious attacks to which the ritual of trade unions and friendly societies were subject. Indeed, while the pressures on trade unions and friendly societies encouraged them to simplify their ritual, the legal protection granted to freemasonry enabled its ritual to be elaborated. Freemasons appear actively to have supported this process of drawing apart from the unions and friendly societies in order to emphasise the respectability of their own organisation. The Duke of Sussex, in reporting his actions after the trial of the Tolpuddle Martyrs, stated that his actions were taken to defend the respectability of the craft. Shortly afterwards, a lecturer at Colchester Mechanics Institute suggested

that the kind of rituals used at Tolpuddle were really no different than freemasonry. A correspondent writing to the local newspaper found this suggestion particularly offensive. The correspondent said that freemasonry was like the 'life giving sun', whereas unions were an ignis fatuus composed of noxious vapours and shining with delusive splendour. Freemasonry enshrined mortal principles; trade unions were a dangerous and destructive tendency. The suspicion of friendly societies and trade unions remained a characteristic of freemasonry. In 1829, a provincial officer wrote anxiously to the Grand Secretary asking whether it was permissible to allow an oddfellow to become a freemason, and, if a freemason became an oddfellow after his initiation, whether this prevented him from becoming a Royal Arch companion. In the 1840s, provincial officers in Wales sternly instructed freemasons to have nothing to do with such dubious bodies as the Druids and the Ivorites.

This process of suggesting that freemasonry embodied some kind of esoteric truth whereas trade union and friendly society rituals were mere mummery was, paradoxically, encouraged by radical thinkers such as Richard Carlile and his friend George Jacob Holyoake. Carlile, following Paine, saw in freemasonry forgotten remnants of ancient truths, whose true meaning he was ordained to teach to the world. By contrast, as we have seen, he strongly denounced similar rituals in trade unions and friendly societies. This kind of schizophrenia was to remain a distinctive feature of English radical

thought, a tendency summed up perhaps in the figure of Annie Besant.

Somebody expressed surprise that I should be speaking on trade unions at the Canonbury Centre, whose focus is freemasonry and esotericism. But, if freemasonry has any esoteric insights to impart, it must come from its ritual, and in understanding that ritual it is essential to look at its comparators. The skeleton at Tolpuddle has as much mystical truth to impart as the temple at Great Queen Street.

**‘The Cause of Humanity’: Charles Bradlaugh and
Freemasonry**

***Lecture to the Quatuor Coronati Lodge No. 2076, 20
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‘I affirm that true Freemasonry knows no religion save that of humanity, no degree of dignity save that of pure manhood, and that the true mission of pure Freemasonry is the enfranchisement and purification alike of the human body and the human mind’.

*Charles Bradlaugh*²⁶⁵

‘If a single atheist, that is, one who denies the existence of the GAOTU, is admitted a member of our society, such admission will be wholly subversive of its first and most sacred principle.’

The Freemason’s Chronicle, 21 October 1876²⁶⁶

A Hawaiian King visits a Boston Lodge

In December 1874, the King of the Hawaiian Islands, Kalakaua, who was a freemason, visited the United States. Among his engagements was a tour of the New York Masonic Temple, where he saw the third degree exemplified, and kissed the Bible on which George Washington supposedly took his oath as President. The English masonic journal, *The Freemason*, duly reported the reception accorded by its brethren in New York to

this exotic and prestigious visitor.²⁶⁷ A couple of weeks later, a correspondent styling himself ‘Reviresco’ wrote to *The Freemason*, drawing attention to a description in another journal of a visit of King Kalakaua to a masonic meeting in Boston, which Reviresco quoted at length.²⁶⁸

This report was written by a man who had been a guest at the Columbian Lodge in Boston when it had been visited by King Kalakaua. The report explained that, although the Sandwich Islands were not the largest in the world, Kalakaua was the first live king to tour the United States, and was therefore a notability. More than three hundred masons assembled for the lodge meeting, and the king was assigned a seat in the east by the Master. The author of the report was given a place of honour, to the left of the king. The lodge meeting was described as follows:

‘The business of the lodge ... was the raising of a fellow-craftsman, to the masters degree, and I had a full opportunity, for about three quarters of an hour, of studying King Kalakaua ... He is a stout, lusty-looking man, with a fairly fine broad forehead, but with thick lips and

²⁶⁵ *National Reformer* (9 December 1877), p. 817.

²⁶⁶ *The Freemason’s Chronicle* (21 October 1876), p. 259.

²⁶⁷ *The Freemason* (20 February 1875), p. 75. On King Kalakaua, who ruled from 1874 until his death in 1891, see Helena G. Allen, *The Betrayal of Liliuokalani, Last Queen of Hawaii 1838-1917* (Glendale, Ca., 1982), which includes (p. 136) a photograph of Kalakaua in his masonic regalia. The ceremony of the laying of the cornerstone of the Iolani Palace built by Kalakaua was performed with full masonic honours, and Kalakaua received a masonic funeral: *ibid.*, pp. 162, 236-7. Kalakaua was initiated in 1859, and his masonic career is summarized by Harold W. Kent, ‘Masonry and Royalty in Hawaii’, *The New Age*, August 1968, pp. 23-26.

²⁶⁸ *The Freemason* (6 March 1875), pp. 98-9.

nostrils and coloured skin, more especially to be found in the negro race ... During an interval of relaxation I was presented to his majesty, to whom I simply bowed, just touching his hand, which he held towards me, no words being used by either ...'

The reasons why *Reviresco* drew the attention of *The Freemason* to this description of the meeting of the Columbian Lodge were the identity of its author and the paper in which it had appeared. The reporter was Charles Bradlaugh, at that time the most notorious and outspoken champion of atheism, and the report was published in the *National Reformer*, a weekly freethought paper edited by Bradlaugh with Annie Besant, which W. H. Smith had refused at one point to sell, and which had been prosecuted for refusing to give sureties against the publication of blasphemy and sedition.²⁶⁹ It was certainly an unusual place for an account of a masonic meeting to appear.

Bradlaugh concluded his report to the *National Reformer* with details of a rousing speech which he had given at the reception for the king after the lodge meeting. Bradlaugh had declared that no greater evidence

could be found of how Freemasonry promotes equality than the proceedings of that evening. The presence of black masons had shown how true Freemasonry knows no distinction of colour. That true Freemasonry had no distinctions of class was shown by the way in which both Bradlaugh and the king were on a level in their work, and at the same table in their feast. Bradlaugh continued:

'The majesty that Freemasonry delights to honour is the majesty of earnest manhood, the kingship which comes of effort, not of birth; the heroism of endeavour for human progress. Speaking for an Orient which has on its muster-rolls many uncrowned kings, for a lodge which has had among its brethren Joseph Mazzini, Joseph Garibaldi and Louis Blanc, I venture to hope that all our brethren will understand the true masonic work in the deliverance of humankind from poverty, ignorance and superstition.'

At the conclusion of his speech, Bradlaugh was given masonic honours, and three cheers. He proposed a toast 'The Cause of Humanity', which the king returned, shaking hands with Bradlaugh, 'on the grounds of our common humanity', amidst much cheering. In forwarding a copy of this report to *The Freemason*, *Reviresco* expressed puzzlement. 'I have heard that Mr Bradlaugh is an atheist. Can it be so, and yet for him to be a mason?... To what lodge and Grand Lodge does Mr Bradlaugh belong? Is he an English freemason or what?'

²⁶⁹ David H. Tribe, *President Charles Bradlaugh M.P.* (1971), pp. 81, 101-2. The report of the visit of King Kalakaua to the Columbian Lodge appeared in the *National Reformer* on 7 February 1875, p. 82. The surprising thing is that *Reviresco* read the *National Reformer*. Indeed, subsequent references to the *National Reformer* in *The Freemason* and elsewhere indicate that it was not unusual for men of very conservative opinions to read the *National Reformer*, and that its readership was by no means restricted to radicals and freethinkers.

‘Iconoclast’

Bradlaugh's iconoclastic career, punctuated by titanic controversies and extraordinary personal dramas, lasted over forty years.²⁷⁰ Bradlaugh achieved prominence as an infidel advocate very young. He was born in the East End of London in 1833, and left school at twelve, becoming an office boy in a law office. He also became a Sunday school teacher. Disturbed by discrepancies in the Bible, he wrote to the clergyman in charge of the parish, who accused him of atheism, and suspended him from his teaching duties in order that he should reflect on the error of his ways. Bradlaugh instead began attending radical meetings, and this confirmed him in his enthusiasm for freethought and opposition to Christianity. At the age of sixteen, he was thrown out of his family home and lost his job because of his outspoken atheist views. He was taken in by Elizabeth Sharples Carlile, the widow of Richard Carlile, who had popularized the ideas of

²⁷⁰ The standard modern biography is Tribe, *op. cit.* There are useful short accounts of Bradlaugh's life in *Biographical Dictionary of Modern British Radicals*, 3 (1870-1914), ed. Joseph O. Baylen and Norbert J. Gossman (1988), pp. 111-118; and *Dictionary of Labour Biography* 7, edited Joyce M. Bellamy and John Saville (1984), pp. 18-26. Bradlaugh's papers, held by the Bishopsgate Institute, were published in a microfilm edition by EP Microform in 1975, with a descriptive index by Edward Royle, which includes a brief summary of his life. The two volume life of Bradlaugh by his daughter, Hypatia Bradlaugh afterwards Bonner, *Charles Bradlaugh. A Record of his Life and Work* (1902) remains a valuable source, and includes (1, pp. 203-6) a short chapter on Bradlaugh as a freemason.

Thomas Paine and had been imprisoned for printing Paine's deistic work, *The Age of Reason*. Richard Carlile's campaign against the ban on printing *The Age of Reason* eventually wore down the government's law officers, and, by establishing the right to publish such attacks on Christianity, Carlile struck an important blow for the freedom of the press. Carlile also espoused other controversial causes, such as birth control, the right to divorce, and vegetarianism.²⁷¹

Elizabeth helped introduce Bradlaugh to the ideas of Richard Carlile, and assisted him in his self-education. Bradlaugh's interest in freethought attracted the attention of two leading radicals and successors of Carlile, George Jacob Holyoake and his brother, Austin. George Holyoake was the chairman of Bradlaugh's first public lecture as an atheist, 'The Past, Present and Future of Theology', given in 1850, when Bradlaugh was just seventeen. In the same year, Bradlaugh also published his first pamphlet, *A Few Words on the Christian Creed*. Bradlaugh was seized with enthusiasm for his new life, but money was a constant problem, and when his growing debts caused some freethinking admirers to take up a subscription for him, his pride was wounded, and he suddenly decided to join the army. He hoped to go to India and make his fortune, but instead ended up stationed in various parts of Ireland. During his time in the army, Bradlaugh continued his study of semitic languages and biblical texts, while first-hand observation

²⁷¹ See *n* 50 below.

of the Irish situation confirmed his radical political opinions. He was discharged in 1853, and returned to London, becoming a solicitor's clerk. He also resumed his career as an advocate of freethought, using the pseudonym 'Iconoclast' to avoid problems with his employers.

'Iconoclast' became a celebrated lecturer both in London and the provinces, quickly rivalling George Holyoake for the leadership of the secular movement. In 1858, Bradlaugh replaced Holyoake as President of the London Secular Society. In 1860, a group of Sheffield freethinkers established a new republican and freethought weekly newspaper, the *National Reformer*, and they offered Bradlaugh the joint editorship. Two years later, Bradlaugh became both proprietor and sole editor of the new newspaper, which appeared without a break until 1893. The *National Reformer* became not only the leading advocate of secular anti-religious values, but also one of the major voices of political radicalism, carrying reports and comment on every contemporary radical movement. Hitherto, the radical and freethought movement had been characterized by short-lived periodicals of limited influence. The relative longevity of the *National Reformer* and its steady sales – more than 6000 per week from 1872 to 1886 – were major achievements. Bradlaugh's success in resisting the prosecution brought against the newspaper for refusing to comply with the laws requiring newspapers to give large sureties that they would not commit blasphemy and

sedition struck a further major blow for the freedom of the press. Bradlaugh was conscious of the need for a stable national organization if the freethought movement was to achieve its aims. He became the first President of the National Secular Society in 1866 and was chiefly responsible for turning it into a genuinely national organization by his barnstorming speaking tours in the provinces which enabled him to persuade local organisations to join the national body.

In July 1874, Bradlaugh received a neatly-written letter from a lady in Norwood asking if it was necessary to be an atheist to join the National Secular Society. The author was Annie Besant, who had begun to feel doubts about Christianity two years previously, and had recently separated from her clergyman husband. Friends had suggested that she should hear Bradlaugh lecture at the Hall of Science and she had been immediately impressed. As soon as Besant met Bradlaugh, she lost any remaining misgivings about atheism and became a fully-fledged convert to the cause. Bradlaugh and Besant became very close, though platonic, friends. For the next decade, they energetically lectured, wrote and campaigned to establish in Britain a secular republican society, free of established religion and hereditary privilege. Bradlaugh's advocacy of birth control, doubtless partly a reflection of Carlile's influence, had already brought him into conflict with some other radicals. Besant was also strongly in favour of increasing awareness of birth control methods, and in 1877 Besant and Bradlaugh together reprinted an old treatise describing methods of contraception published in

America in the 1830s, Dr Charles Knowlton's *The Fruits of Philosophy*. The resulting trial for obscenity bought both Besant and Bradlaugh national notoriety and obloquy, but, largely as a result of a brilliant speech by Besant towards the end of the trial, the jury declared the defendants innocent of any corrupt motive though technically guilty. An appeal court later found the pair simply not guilty. However, Besant paid a bitter price for this triumph. Her atheism and advocacy of birth control enabled her estranged husband to allege that she was an immoral woman, who was not fit to retain custody of her daughter. Despite strenuous campaigning by the *National Reformer*, custody of the child was awarded to the father. The judge admitted that Annie Besant was a good mother, but her atheism was the deciding factor in his awarding against her.

Bradlaugh's anti-religious stance was accompanied by political radicalism from an early stage in his career. He was an active member of the Reform League demanding an extension of the parliamentary suffrage in the period immediately before the Reform Act of 1867, and played a prominent part in the Hyde Park demonstration which helped secure this extension of voting rights. Bradlaugh strongly opposed coercive measures in Ireland and was a supporter of Irish home rule, seeing land reform as a major social objective. Throughout his career, Bradlaugh supported the nationalist movements in Italy and Poland, worked with French refugees in rallying opposition to Napoleon III and played a prominent part in encouraging support in Britain for the establishment of a republic in

France after 1870. In later life, Bradlaugh took a great interest in Indian affairs, speaking at a meeting of the Indian National Congress. Among his admirers was the young Gandhi.

Bradlaugh first stood for election to Parliament at Northampton in 1868. Finally, in 1880 he was elected as the junior Member of Parliament for Northampton. He was under the impression that recent legislative changes meant that, when taking his seat, he did not need to swear an oath but could affirm. When he arrived at Westminster and formally requested permission to affirm, the Speaker refused, and referred the matter to a select committee, which decided that Members of Parliament were not allowed to affirm. Bradlaugh said that he would not allow an 'idle form' to stand in the way of the mandate of the electors of Northampton, and that he would simply take the oath. The idea that an atheist should take the oath and kiss the bible created uproar, and when Bradlaugh appeared in the House of Commons, a motion was passed declaring that Bradlaugh was not permitted to take the oath. The Prime Minister, Gladstone, considered that Bradlaugh should be allowed to take his seat, but nevertheless he remained excluded from parliament. Mass meetings in support of Bradlaugh were held throughout the country. At one point, Bradlaugh appeared again in the House to take the oath and, when he refused to withdraw, he was arrested by the Sergeant-at-Arms and imprisoned in the Clock Tower. Attempts to introduce resolutions and legislation allowing Bradlaugh to affirm were met by opposition

from both the Tory party and the churches, and were unsuccessful. The controversy dragged on for five years, seriously hampering the work of Gladstone's government and at times virtually bringing the work of the House of Commons to a halt. Bradlaugh repeatedly submitted himself to by-elections at Northampton, in which he was victorious. The problem would not go away. Finally, in 1885, a general election was held. When Bradlaugh appeared as one of the newly elected Members of Parliament, the new Speaker declared that previous resolutions had lapsed, and allowed Bradlaugh to swear the oath and take his seat. Bradlaugh served as a very conscientious Member of Parliament until his death in 1891. In 1888, Bradlaugh was responsible for legislation which secured the right to affirm both in law courts and parliament, and finally ensured that any man would be able to serve as a Member of Parliament, regardless of his religious convictions.

It is for securing the right to affirm that Bradlaugh is best remembered.²⁷² The Bradlaugh case can perhaps be seen simply as a footnote in constitutional history, and not necessarily a significant one, since the right to affirm had already been secured elsewhere, and Bradlaugh's problems in Parliament simply exposed a forgotten anomaly. However, this underestimates the impact of the Bradlaugh case. The controversy about Bradlaugh and

²⁷² A comprehensive study of the Bradlaugh case is Walter L. Arnstein, *The Bradlaugh Case: Atheism, Sex, and Politics Among the Late Victorians* (rev. ed., Columbia Missouri, 1984).

the parliamentary oath engendered a far-reaching debate about the nature of religion in British society in which church leaders such as the Archbishop of Canterbury and Cardinal Manning played a leading part. Recent scholars such as Joss Marsh have stressed how the anxieties exposed by the Bradlaugh debate as to whether atheism was acceptable in British society and the moral dangers which it posed were of central social and cultural importance in Britain in the 1870s and 1880s.²⁷³ As such, the controversy in the columns of *The Freeman* in 1875 about Bradlaugh's status as a freemason is significant both in prefiguring many of the arguments which resurfaced at the time Bradlaugh sought to enter Parliament and in shedding significant further light on contemporary anxieties about the threat of atheism. Moreover, this controversy fed directly into the dispute between the Grand Lodges of the Anglo-Saxon world and the Grand Orient of France over the requirement that freemasons should believe in a supreme being which

²⁷³ Joss Marsh, *Word Crimes: Blasphemy, Culture and Literature in Nineteenth-Century England* (Chicago, 1998), particularly pp. 3-17, 127-268. Marsh gives limited weight to the impact of Darwin's ideas and of historical materialism generally, but Peter Fraser, in reviewing Arnstein's book, comments that 'the nature of the crisis of the 1880s of which the Bradlaugh case formed a part is entirely misconceived. It was not just a "religious" struggle but the first popular encounter between religion and scientific materialism': Arnstein, *op. cit.*, pp. 341-2. This theme is particularly evident in examining the dispute between English and French Freemasonry in 1877-8, where English objections to positivist philosophy are prominent.

resulted in a permanent rift between the Grand Lodge of England and the Grand Orient of France. The dispute between French and English Freemasonry is another, and neglected, facet of the British debate about atheism at this time, and one in which Bradlaugh himself played a significant role.

Bradlaugh versus *The Freemason*

Following the publication of Bradlaugh's description of the visit of King Kalakaua to the Lodge in Boston by Reviresco, there was a brief flurry of letters in the correspondence columns of *The Freemason* discussing the nature of Bradlaugh's masonic credentials.²⁷⁴ It was suggested that perhaps he was connected with a spurious French lodge in London, but confirmation of Bradlaugh's claim to be a freemason could only be obtained from the man himself. Readers of *The Freemason* eagerly awaited his return to London to hear more about his masonic career. On 16 March 1875, Bradlaugh sent a note to the editor of *The Freemason* clarifying the position:

'Charles Bradlaugh, born 20th September 1833, was made in the *Loge des Philadelphes*, on the 9th March 1859, was received in the *Loge de la Persévérante Amitié*, Grand Orient of France, 11th March 1862, and was an avowed atheist prior to the first date.

Charles Bradlaugh also joined the Tottenham High Cross Lodge [No. 754], after a discussion on his anti-theological opinions, and he received his regular certificate from the Grand Lodge, which

²⁷⁴ *The Freemason* (13 and 20 March 1875), pp. 109, 119.

certificate he returned to the Secretary of the Grand Lodge of England last September, cancelled, in consequence of the accession of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales as Grand Master. The lodge at Tottenham, changing its locale, Mr Bradlaugh only subscribed one year.'²⁷⁵

This clear and straightforward explanation of the facts is borne out by the surviving records both in the Library and Museum of Freemasonry in London and in Bradlaugh's own papers, now kept at the Bishopsgate Institute. Bradlaugh cherished his masonic membership, and his certificates were carefully preserved in a large black deed box among his papers.²⁷⁶ The Bradlaugh Papers include a certificate signed by Marshal Magnan as Grand Master of the Grand Orient of France, dated 11 May 1862 with the number 843, and *inscribed* 'A *La Gloire du G.A. de L'U*:', declaring that Bradlaugh had been received as a Master mason by *La Persévérante Amitié* of Paris on 11 March 1862.²⁷⁷ Bradlaugh also carefully preserved the certificate of his initiation in the

²⁷⁵ *Op. cit.* (20 March 1875), p. 119. This information was repeated in the Answers to Correspondents section of the *National Reformer* on 21 March 1875, Bradlaugh declaring that he did not pretend to be an English mason but did pretend to be a member of *La Persévérante Amitié* and the *Philadelphes*.

²⁷⁶ Bishopsgate Institute, Bradlaugh Papers No. 3337.

²⁷⁷ Bishopsgate Institute, Bradlaugh Papers No. 91. Reproduced in the microfilm edition of Bradlaugh's papers.

Loge des Philadelphes, but it has unfortunately recently been mislaid.²⁷⁸

The return of the High Cross Lodge No. 754, held at the Railway Hotel, Northumberland Park, Tottenham, for August 1865 to August 1866 declares that on 27 September 1865, Charles Bradlaugh, gentleman, of Tottenham, 'Joined from a French lodge', and paid one pound seven shillings and sixpence for a certificate and registration, together with four shillings quarterage.²⁷⁹ Bradlaugh's name was duly entered on the Grand Lodge register. On the return for the following year, Bradlaugh, this time described as a solicitor, again paid his quarterage. As Bradlaugh stated, in 1868, High Cross Lodge moved to a new meeting place at the White Hart Hotel, and Bradlaugh ceased to attend the lodge. In the return for 1868-9, he is recorded as a defaulter, and the following year he ceased to appear in the returns of the High Cross Lodge. By this time, Bradlaugh had more substantial complaints against English Freemasonry. His certificate as an English freemason is preserved in the Document Collection in the Library and Museum of

²⁷⁸ Bishopsgate Institute, Bradlaugh Papers Map Folder G. Noted as missing 25 July 2001; unfortunately this item was not included in the microfilm edition of Bradlaugh's papers.

²⁷⁹ F. W. Ordish, *The High Cross Lodge No. 754 (1858-1948)* (3rd ed. 1948), p. 13 notes that 'Although there is no evidence that he ever took an active part in the working of the Lodge... Charles Bradlaugh, who gained some eminence in Gladstonian days, was at one time a member of High Cross. His name, in fact, appears as a dining member on the roll of 1865'.

Freemasonry. It declares that Brother Charles Bradlaugh was regularly received into Freemasonry in a lodge in France, was admitted to the third degree on 27 September 1865 in the High Cross Lodge, and duly registered. The certificate is dated 8 March 1868 and bears the registration number 1133. However, Bradlaugh's signature in the margin has been crossed through and the following words inserted in Bradlaugh's hand: 'Cancelled on the accession of the Grand Master in succession to Marquis [*sic*] of Ripon'.

The immediate reaction of *The Freemason* was that the word of an atheist cannot be trusted, and it sought to cast aspersions on the regularity of Bradlaugh's admission.²⁸⁰ It expressed doubt about *La Persévérante Amitié*, claiming that the existence of such a lodge could not be established, although it appeared in the *Calendrier Maçonnique* of the Grand Orient.²⁸¹ *The Freemason* was also suspicious of his connection with the High Cross Lodge, pointing out that Bradlaugh did not state which year he joined the lodge. In any case, *The Freemason* pointed out, Bradlaugh had by the time he visited America returned his English certificate. A more substantial objection was the nature of Bradlaugh's original Initiation. Bradlaugh had carefully avoided stating that the *Loge des Philadelphes* met in London, but this was picked up by *The Freemason*, which pointed

²⁸⁰ *The Freemason* (27 March 1875), p. 126.

²⁸¹ *Calendrier Maçonnique du Grand Orient de France...1860*, p. 81.

out that the *Philadelphes* were not recognized by the Grand Lodge of England, and that the Grand Lodge had circulated its members warning them against associating with this ‘spurious political and unrecognized order’. For *The Freemason*, Bradlaugh’s initiation was ‘radically wrong’ and ‘vicious’. In the considered opinion of *The Freemason*, Bradlaugh was not legitimately a freemason and was merely a member of a spurious fraternity.

This attack outraged Bradlaugh, who replied at length in a leader blazoned across the front page of the *National Reformer*.²⁸² He was dumbfounded at the inability of the learned editor of *The Freemason* to trace *La Persévérante Amitié*:

‘If you had inquired at the proper source, you could not have avoided finding it; and if you do not know where to look, it will be only because your acquaintance with Freemasonry is of a very limited nature.’

Bradlaugh declared that it was under his French certificate that he had visited the lodges in Boston:

‘I say nothing of the good taste and masonic feeling which permits you to suggest, through a correspondent, that these respectable and influential American lodges are also spurious assemblies – that is a matter for yourself; but if you had stopped to inquire, you would have well known, and easily ascertained, that it would simply be physically impossible for an irregular masonic lodge to meet in the Boston Masonic Temple.’

²⁸² *National Reformer* (11 April 1875), p. 225.

Bradlaugh hotly defended the *Philadelphes*. He pointed out that Garibaldi, then Grand Master of Italy, was a member of the lodge, so that if there was a ‘taint’ on Bradlaugh’s admission, at least he had not sinned in ignoble company. Although the Grand Lodge of England might deny the *Philadelphes* fraternal greeting and co-operation, many lodges in France, Belgium, Italy and Poland had given this recognition. The *Philadelphes*, by helping the poor, the friendless, the oppressed and the exiled, had honoured the true meaning of Masonry.

As far as Bradlaugh’s admission to the White Cross Lodge was concerned, he pointed out that he had joined the lodge at the special request of its brethren, among whom he had lived for twenty years. But his most withering criticisms were of the English Grand Lodge:

‘Tell me how it is that the very Grand Lodge of England itself could have issued its solemn certificate, duly signed and countersigned, vouching me to be a regular mason, if there is, or could be, any doubt on the matter? Is the system of issuing masonic certificates by the Grand Lodge of England so loose that it may be possible to vouch one who is not a mason? For several years I held this certificate; I returned it of my own motion, but only when a Grand Master was elected to whom I can never pretend to pay masonic allegiance...If your present contention be true, then I must have equally deceived the Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge of England, or he must be unable, when issuing his certificate to tell a true freemason from an impostor. You ought to know better than this.’

For *The Freemason*, on mature reflection, the question of how Britain’s most notorious atheist had been given a certificate as a regular mason by the English Grand Lodge was indeed the nub of the matter. Here the responsibility, in its view, clearly lay with the High

Cross Lodge. In a further leader, *The Freemason* pressed the members of the lodge to provide an explanation:

‘We would venture to ask the brethren of the High Cross Lodge, for grave responsibility rests upon them, as towards the Craft at large, what certificate did Mr Bradlaugh bring with him when he was admitted a joining member of that lodge under the English Constitution? On what grounds did High Cross Lodge obtain for Mr Bradlaugh a certificate from the Grand Secretary’s office? For if we understand Mr Bradlaugh’s account correctly, he was never a member of a lawful lodge at all! ... We however await some little explanation from the members of the High Cross Lodge.’²⁸³

There is no indication that the High Cross Lodge ever sought the guidance of the Grand Secretary on any of these points, and, despite the demands of *The Freemason* that the lodge should justify itself,²⁸⁴ no member of the lodge entered the fray. At the end of May, a lengthy report of a meeting of the lodge appeared in *The Freemason*, emphasising its flourishing state and the enthusiasm with which loyal toasts were drunk, which was apparently a belated attempt to distance the lodge from the affair.²⁸⁵

In the meantime, the controversy about Bradlaugh’s masonic membership had spread beyond the pages of *The Freemason* and the *National Reformer*. It was reported and sagely discussed in the *Birmingham*

²⁸³ *The Freemason* (10 April 1875), pp. 146-7.

²⁸⁴ Repeated in *The Freemason* (24 April 1875), pp. 166-7: ‘The High Cross Lodge had received him, and were alone responsible for his admission into our English order’.

²⁸⁵ *The Freemason* (23 May 1875), p. 207.

Morning News, *The Liverpool Weekly Post*, *The Glasgow News*, and other papers.²⁸⁶ These articles were generally unsympathetic to Bradlaugh, and concluded that Freemasonry and atheism did not mix. The most interesting further contributions to the debate, however, were in periodicals associated with foreign masonic jurisdictions. In France, *Le Monde Maçonnique* also reported the visit of King Kalakaua to the Columbian Lodge, and reproduced the speech of ‘le Frère Bradlaugh’ on this occasion.²⁸⁷ It alleged that *The Freemason* had failed to mention the most notable feature of this meeting, namely that one of those attending had been Joshua Smith, a black man, who had been a mason for about eight years and had recently been made Junior Warden of the Adelphi Lodge in Boston, the first time a black man had been honoured in this way by a white American lodge. Smith was a magistrate and held political office in Massachusetts. He was a devoted friend of Charles Sumner, the American senator, an outspoken opponent of slavery, advocate of black civil rights and pioneering peace campaigner, who Bradlaugh met and admired, writing a memoir of him.²⁸⁸ For *Le Monde Maçonnique*, the presence of Smith at the meeting of the Columbian Lodge was an event of very

²⁸⁶ *Op. Cit.* (24 April 1875), p. 166; *National Reformer* (18 April 1875).

²⁸⁷ *Le Monde Maçonnique* 16 (1874-5), 503-6.

²⁸⁸ *Five Dead Men Whom I Knew When Living* (London, 1877), pp. 19-23.

great importance. But, to the amusement and surprise of the French journal, this was not the aspect of the meeting which had caught the attention of its brethren across the Channel.²⁸⁹ It described for its readers in astonished and mocking tones the controversy in England over the attendance of Bradlaugh. *Le Monde Maçonnique* noted that English brethren were assiduously investigating the matter, and promised to advise its readers of the findings of 'les graves docteurs de la Maçonnerie Anglaise'. For *Le Monde Maçonnique*, there was no doubt about Bradlaugh's credentials as a freemason, and the controversy in England confirmed the French journal's suspicions that Freemasonry in England was more concerned with protecting established religion than with social justice.

More surprising was a letter which appeared in *The Scottish Freemasons' Magazine*, which noted that brethren south of the border were at that time preoccupied by two great matters, the imminent installation of the Prince of Wales as Grand Master, and 'How did it come to pass that Mr Charles Bradlaugh was

²⁸⁹ The suggestion made by *Le Monde Maçonnique* that Smith's presence at this meeting was completely ignored by *The Freemason* was not accurate. In his original letter, Reviresco states that Bradlaugh had also attended the meeting in New York at which Sumner was elected, and added 'We say all honour to the Boston freemasons for so doing, and we thank Mr Bradlaugh for the information'. Nevertheless, it is true that this issue was not mentioned again in the subsequent editorials and correspondence in *The Freemason*.

a member of an English masonic lodge?'²⁹⁰ Reviewing the matter, the Scottish journal came to the conclusion that, if there was blame to be laid anywhere, it was not at Bradlaugh's door. It had no desire to 'join in the wonderful outcry that has been raised by a London masonic contemporary on this subject', but nevertheless declared that:

'Looking at the matter ... from a legal as well as a liberal and fraternal point of view, it would appear that Mr Bradlaugh possessed a proper and formal certificate under the Grand Orient of France, signifying that he was considered by that body to be really and truly a freemason. The Grand Orient of France is recognized by the Grand Lodge of England, the brethren of the Tottenham High Cross Lodge, upon presentation by Mr Bradlaugh of his diploma from the former body...were quite justified in receiving him as a brother, after passing the other usual test, and the officers of the Grand Lodge of England were also justified in endorsing the action of the daughter lodge No. 754.

The article considered that the question of Bradlaugh's status as an avowed atheist at the time was a concern not for the English lodge, but rather for the lodge which initiated him, noting that French lodges did not seem to be as strict in certain points as English lodges. However, unlike *The Freemason*, the Scottish journal was willing to believe the word of an atheist. It declared that it is quite possible for a man to be an atheist and still be true and honest in his convictions:

²⁹⁰ *National Reformer* (25 April 1875), p. 265.

‘If our French brethren honour such a man by making him the brother of our fraternity, they are simply following out of the same line of conduct as is now adopted in our courts of law, where the formal affirmation of an atheist is as good for evidence as the usual oath.’

This is a remarkable article to have appeared in a Scottish masonic journal, not only because of its sympathy with Bradlaugh’s position, but also because of the way in which it anticipates many of the arguments which surfaced again when Bradlaugh was elected to Parliament, in respect of the validity of an atheist’s declaration and the validity of affirmation.

Bradlaugh rarely received such generous treatment in journals not directly associated with radicalism or freethought, so not surprisingly he reprinted this article in the *National Reformer*. Shortly afterwards, a letter appeared in the *National Reformer*, signed ‘A Freemason’,²⁹¹ perhaps by the Scottish masonic scholar W. P. Buchan,²⁹² which welcomed the article in *The Scottish Freemasons’ Magazine* as showing a progressive spirit. The letter suggested that the outcry raised at Bradlaugh’s admission into an English masonic Lodge would do good, for it would set men thinking, and thought leads to progress. It went on to point out that

²⁹¹ *Op. cit.* (2 May 1875), p. 284.

²⁹² Buchan was evidently a regular reader of the *National Reformer*, and afterwards contributed to it. He had already noticed Bradlaugh’s account of his speech in Boston, and taken issue with his statement that masonic lodges existed in Europe in the seventeenth century: *National Reformer*, 21 February 1875; *The Scottish Freemasons’ Magazine* (6, 15 March 1875), p. 72.

Anderson’s 1723 Constitutions stated that if the freemason ‘rightly understand the Art, he will never be a stupid atheist, nor an irreligious libertine’. Bradlaugh was neither stupid nor a libertine. The letter argued that the Constitutions simply required that freemasons should be good men and true, men of honour and honesty, by whatever denominations or persuasions they may be distinguished. The author continued:

‘Taking my stand therefore upon the grand old Constitutions, which are the foundation of Freemasonry throughout all the world, I respectfully affirm that the Worshipful Master of the High Cross Lodge did well, and also acted in true conformity with the spirit of Freemasonry, when he held out the right hand of friendship to Mr Bradlaugh and welcomed him as a member of his lodge. It is neither to Freemasonry itself nor to true freemasons that this outcry is due; its real origin is to be found in that religious bigotry which it was the object of Freemasonry to counteract and quench.’

Later in the month, Buchan, a forceful proponent of the view that the origins of Freemasonry cannot be traced back much beyond 1717, contributed under his own name an ‘Open Column’ in the *National Reformer*, taking issue with comments of Lord Carnarvon at the installation of The Prince of Wales stating that Freemasonry was of great antiquity.²⁹³ This led to a

²⁹³ *National Reformer* (21 May 1875), p. 335. This was also published in *The Freemason’s Chronicle* (8 May 1875), p. 295, prompting a subsequent leader affirming the antiquity of Freemasonry: *The Freemason’s Chronicle* (15 May 1875), p. 305 (with a rejoinder by Buchan, p. 326).

further correspondence in the *National Reformer* about the origins of the Craft.²⁹⁴

The Freemason was closely linked to the more conservative wing of English Freemasonry which particularly cherished the connection between English Freemasonry and the established church. Its founding editor was Robert Wentworth Little, who trained to be a clergyman.²⁹⁵ At the time of the controversy about Bradlaugh's masonic membership, *The Freemason* was edited by the Reverend Adolphus Woodford, who had been a Provincial Grand Chaplain in Yorkshire, West Riding.²⁹⁶ The enthusiasms of the editors and publisher of *The Freemason* are apparent from the long series of articles published by it in 1872 written by the prolific Biblical commentator William Chambers, who sought to demonstrate that the Anglo-Saxons were a lost tribe of Israel and that the British Empire was the fulfilment of the divine mission of the chosen people.²⁹⁷ Such fare was not to the taste of all English freemasons, and 1875 also

²⁹⁴ *National Reformer* (4 July 1875), pp. 12-13; (25 July 1875), p. 61.

²⁹⁵ *The Rosicrucian and Masonic Record*, (April 1878), pp. 398-9; *The Freemason*, (20 April 1878), pp. 201-2.

²⁹⁶ Woodford was Editor from 1873-85: John A. Seed, 'A.F.A. Woodford – Progenitor of Quatuor Coronati Lodge No. 2076', *AQC* 93 (1980), pp. 119, 122.

²⁹⁷ Reprinted by Kenning as *The Israelites Found in the Anglo-Saxons* (1872). Chambers was an active agitator for political reform in the 1830s, editing *The Political Letter*, and was also a supporter of many other causes, such as chancery reform.

marked the first year of publication of *The Freemason's Chronicle*, which was established partly in reaction to the strongly pro-clerical line of *The Freemason*. In its first number, *The Freemason's Chronicle* declared that:

'... the occasional discussion of social questions, in a free and impartial style in the pages of a journal devoted to the interests of the Craft, cannot but be beneficial.'²⁹⁸

Its second number carried a review of the political situation in Europe, and subsequent issues dealt with such matters as 'Homes and Education' and 'Labour Its Rights and Duties', declaring with regard to the trade union movement that freemasons 'can look upon the movements of the working classes with abounding charity...'²⁹⁹ *The Freemason's Chronicle* was generally more sympathetic to developments in French Freemasonry than *The Freemason*, and its establishment was welcomed by *Le Monde Maçonnique*, which reprinted some of its articles, describing them as remarkable.³⁰⁰ It is striking that *The Freemason's Chronicle* paid no attention to the 1875 controversy over Bradlaugh's masonic membership. 'L'affaire Bradlaugh' was largely generated by the editor and readers of *The Freemason*.

However, *The Freemason* seems soon to have lost heart in its battle with Bradlaugh, and, after a final leader

²⁹⁸ *The Freemason's Chronicle*, (2 January 1875), p. 1.

²⁹⁹ *Op. cit.* (9 January 1875), pp. 24-7; (16 January 1875), pp. 34-5; (30 January 1875), pp. 67-8.

³⁰⁰ *Le Monde Maçonnique* 17 (1875-6), pp. 469-71.

on 24 April 1875 reiterating its belief that Bradlaugh was an irregularly made mason, pinning the blame firmly on the High Cross Lodge, and exonerating the Grand Secretary, it dropped the matter, perhaps for fear of embarrassing the Grand Secretary.³⁰¹ It was presumably about this time that the entry for Bradlaugh in the Grand Lodge register was annotated in pencil: 'The lodge from which Bradlaugh joined is a spurious lodge'. In November, however, the *National Reformer* returned to the matter.³⁰² While Bradlaugh had been in Boston he was charged by a lodge connected with the *Philadelphes* to present a letter of congratulation to the Adelphi Lodge in Boston on the installation of Joshua Smith as Junior Warden. The Adelphi Lodge had sent a letter of thanks, which Bradlaugh reprinted in full:

'We have received with unfeigned pleasure and appreciation the communication containing your greetings and congratulations on the election of Brother Joshua B. Smith to the office of Junior Warden in Adelphi Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons. His election to this responsible position was hailed by us with special gratification inasmuch as it was done by the unanimous vote of our lodge. The heartiness with which this act was accomplished was significant, marking as it did the progress of liberty and equality, and showing that colour, race, parentage, or any of the accidents of birth, were not hindrances in the way of recognising the services of a good man in describing the place he secured. We in America, by the genius of our institutions, have sought to inculcate the lesson that all men were born free and equal, and that all should have the same privileges and advantages in making the most of life. We are sincerely glad that the recent exhibition we have given of this principle, as a lodge, should

have called forth so cordial a response from you...We cherish the hope that so glorious an achievement may be encouraged and hastened by the influence of our ancient and sublime brotherhood, an institution everywhere based on charity and the better promptings of human nature.'

Such an address strikingly demonstrated how the Adelphi Lodge, a regular lodge under the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts, was like its fellow, the Columbian Lodge, convinced of the regularity of both Brother Bradlaugh and the French lodges in London which he represented.

Thus drew to a close the 1875 controversy about Bradlaugh's masonic membership.³⁰³ This episode is striking for the way in which it prefigures themes which were to resurface on a much larger scale when Bradlaugh was elected to Parliament. For a large and influential group, whose views were articulated in this case by *The*

³⁰³ It resurfaced many years later in 1934 when 'Mancunian' wrote to *Notes and Queries* noting a reference to Bradlaugh as a freemason in a book marking the centenary of Bradlaugh's birth. He noted that, although Bradlaugh was a member of the Grand Orient, it was also stated that he belonged to a lodge in Tottenham. Declaring that an atheist freemason in England was an 'impossible situation', he asked for clarification. Bradlaugh's daughter replied explaining how Bradlaugh joined the High Cross Lodge, and giving an extract from the letter supporting Bradlaugh in the *Scottish Freemasons' Magazine*. She added 'Some lodges definitely exclude non-believers in Christianity; others do not. The *Loge des Philadelphes* [sic], which Mr. Bradlaugh joined in 1859, had upon its rolls the name of Giuseppe Garibaldi. Garibaldi was also Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Italy. But he was likewise President of Honour of the Atheist Society of Milan': *Notes and Queries* 166 (1934), pp. 370, 411-12.

³⁰¹ *The Freemason* (24 April 1875), pp. 166-7.

³⁰² *National Reformer* (21 November 1875), p. 321.

Freemason, an atheist was a pariah, whose word could never be trusted and who could be attacked in the most violent language. For this group, because an atheist was by definition a man who was beyond respectability, without honour or moral code, any form of swearing or affirmation by an atheist was inherently untrustworthy and unacceptable. Those of a more liberal mind, represented in this case by *The Scottish Freemasons' Magazine* and by Buchan (if he was indeed the author of the letter supporting Bradlaugh), felt that an atheist was acceptable, providing he was respectable and honourable. The importance of respectability was a point of which Bradlaugh himself was extremely conscious, and he himself was always in his personal behaviour the epitome of Victorian middle class respectability, taking prompt legal action against anyone who suggested otherwise. As with the dispute about the Parliamentary oath, there was at the heart of the masonic controversy a legal anomaly, namely that, although Bradlaugh had been initiated in a lodge not recognised as regular by its local Grand Lodge, he had nevertheless received a certificate as a regular mason by another Grand Lodge which was accepted in England. In both cases, Bradlaugh proved a past master in exploiting these anomalies, but the debate in the end resolved itself into one about respectability, and whether an atheist could ever be a man of honour. Many foreign commentators were bemused by the controversy about Bradlaugh's Parliamentary membership, and likewise masons in both France and America, who had readily accepted Bradlaugh as a

brother, were amazed at the horror with which the English reacted to the idea of Bradlaugh as a mason.

In the vast literature generated by Bradlaugh's election as a Member of Parliament, it was inevitable that the question of his masonic membership would be again picked up, but it was never a major theme. In May 1881, *The Whitehall Review* used Bradlaugh's masonic connection to snipe at him, and to suggest once more that Bradlaugh was 'utterly unscrupulous', and that for him 'neither oath nor affirmation has the smallest meaning'.³⁰⁴ The article assumed wrongly that in becoming a freemason Bradlaugh must have sworn an oath on the Bible and was therefore a perjurer. It complained that Bradlaugh, a sponsor of 'indescribably filthy' books on birth control, felt that The Prince of Wales was not sufficiently virtuous to lead English Freemasonry, and suggested that Bradlaugh should be prosecuted for his impertinence in refusing to accept the Prince as a Grand Master. The question of Bradlaugh's election to Parliament occasionally surfaced in the columns of *The Freemason*. In 1881, Bradlaugh announced at a meeting protesting against his exclusion that he intended to force his way into the House of Commons. This meeting was held at the Surrey Masonic Hall in Camberwell where there was a large lecture room available for general hire. 'Hercules', writing to *The Freemason*, asked whether the letting had been approved by local freemasons, and suggested that it was unmasonic

³⁰⁴ A copy is on the biographical file for Charles Bradlaugh.

to offer a platform to ‘the zany who “has said in his heart there is no God”’. It was pointed out that the original masonic hall company had gone bankrupt, and that the hall, while still available for masonic meetings, was in fact owned by the South London Institute of Music.³⁰⁵

In October 1881, the *National Reformer* reported that a masonic lodge, *Les Amis de la Parfaite Intelligence*, of Huy in Belgium, had sent an address of sympathy and confidence to Bradlaugh in his parliamentary struggle, concluding with the declaration:

‘That it is contrary to liberty of conscience that there should exist the legal necessity for the introduction of supernatural dogma in the sacred formula which binds the honour of the public man in the most solemn fashion to preserve the order existing in this country.’³⁰⁶

A correspondent asking *The Freemason* whether such a proceeding was not unmasonic received the following brisk reply:

‘We publish this letter somewhat unwillingly. Mr Bradlaugh, having returned his ‘Certificate’ to the late Grand Secretary, has nothing to do with Masonry, and cannot be recognized in Anglo-Saxon Freemasonry, and therefore we think that neither his name nor discussions about his proceedings should appear in a masonic journal. We are not surprised at anything the Belgium freemasons may do, or say. In English Freemasonry any such addresses would be instantly prohibited and are *ipso facto* illegal.’

³⁰⁵ *The Freemason* (23 July 1881), pp. 335-6, 345, 366. On the Surrey Masonic Hall, see further *n* 153 below.

³⁰⁶ *Op. cit.* (1 October 1881), p. 438.

In 1882, another correspondent, ‘Puzzled’, asked *The Freemason* if Bradlaugh was a mason, and was told, wrongly, that Bradlaugh was initiated in Paris. Nevertheless, Bradlaugh’s pariah status was unchanged:

‘He is not now receivable in any Anglo-Saxon Lodge, and the only wonder is that he was ever admitted into English Masonry at all. English Freemasonry rejects and sternly repudiates all atheists.’³⁰⁷

A number of the leading figures involved in the dispute over Bradlaugh’s Parliamentary oath were freemasons, and it is tempting to think that their attitudes were influenced by knowledge of Bradlaugh’s brush with *The Freemason* in 1875. For example, the Speaker, Henry Brand, afterwards 1st Viscount Hampden, whose decision in referring Bradlaugh’s initial request to affirm to a select committee precipitated the crisis, was a freemason.³⁰⁸ However, the chief influence on the Speaker’s actions was not any recollection of a dispute in *The Freemason*, but rather a firm belief that such a matter should be referred to the House for consideration, particularly in view of doubts as to whether the legislation allowing affirmation in law courts applied in Parliament. The Pro Grand Master, Lord Carnarvon, was of course a prominent member of the Tory opposition.³⁰⁹

³⁰⁷ *Op. cit.* (18 November 1882), p. 643.

³⁰⁸ *Op. cit.* (10 February 1883), p. 77.

³⁰⁹ In opposing a bill to allow affirmation in 1882, Carnarvon said of Bradlaugh: ‘Who was he that Parliament should allow him this privilege? Was he one with a tender conscience, with scrupulous

In the Commons itself, two of the Tory leaders opposed to Bradlaugh, Sir Stafford Northcote, 8th Bt, afterwards 1st Earl of Iddesleigh, and Lord Randolph Churchill, were both also freemasons.³¹⁰ However, neither seems to have particularly active masons and there is little indication that they were directly influenced by the earlier controversy. Moreover, masonic representation was, if anything, even stronger in Gladstone's government, which tended to support Bradlaugh. Masonic members of Gladstone's cabinet included Lord Granville, the Foreign Secretary, Hugh Childers, successively Secretary of State for War and Chancellor of the Exchequer (Past Senior Grand Deacon, Yorkshire, West Riding), the President of the Local Government Board, Sir Charles Dilke (Dilke was himself an avowed Republican, who said of Bradlaugh that he 'does the thinking for more minds...than any other man in England...'³¹¹ and he was also a close friend of such French Republican masons as Gambetta) and Sir George

conscientious doubts? Had he not avowed himself an atheist, and then expressed his readiness to take an oath which would have no binding effect on his conscience?' Carnarvon's views on atheism seem to have been muddled. He declared himself happy to admit honest atheists to Parliament, but nevertheless declared that once the country became godless, its legislation could not be wise: *National Reformer*, 16 July 1882. Carnarvon's willingness to admit 'honest atheists' (but not Bradlaugh) to parliament contrasts with his firm line with regard to the Grand Orient in the Quarterly Communications of December 1877 and March 1878.

³¹⁰ *The Freemason* (4 July 1885), p. 329.

³¹¹ Tribe, *op. cit.*, p. 150.

Otto Trevelyan.³¹² There are some occasional hints of masonic influence in some of the language used in the course of the controversy, as for example in the use of the phrase 'supreme being' in some of the draft legislation brought forward to exclude Bradlaugh, but in general the 1875 controversy had little direct influence on the Parliamentary oath crisis.

The 1875 controversy about Bradlaugh as a freemason sheds light on the anxieties about atheism which escalated into a major social crisis in the 1880s, of which the Parliamentary crisis concerning Bradlaugh was the most dramatic expression. However, the 1875 debate did not feed directly into events in parliament. The arena where the 1875 controversy had a far more profound impact was in relations between the Grand Lodges of the English-speaking world and the Grand Orient of France, and in particular on English reaction to the increasing tendency of French lodges to dispense with the requirement for belief in a supreme being and not to use Bibles in lodges. The English reaction to these developments in French Freemasonry provides a further major expression of English anxieties about atheism at this time, which has hitherto been overlooked. Since Freemasonry embraced so many political, religious and cultural leaders on both sides of the Channel at that time, the dispute over the Grand Orient's actions played a significant role in shaping and hardening views in both

³¹² *The Freemason*, *ibid.*

England and France of the relationship between religion, freedom of conscience and morality.

The Roots of Bradlaugh's Freemasonry

From the beginning of the nineteenth century, English radical thought was intrigued by Freemasonry. At the time of his death, Thomas Paine left unfinished a response to the Bishop of Llandaff's attack on his notorious work, *The Age of Reason*. Part of Paine's unfinished book was a thoughtful *Essay on Free Masonry* which argued that Christianity was a perversion of the ancient worship of the sun, and that Freemasonry preserved these old tenets in a purer form. Paine's thesis that Freemasonry preserved an ancient, uncorrupted religion was to haunt British radical thought for the next hundred years. Towards the end of his life, Paine lived with the family of a French radical and freemason, Nicholas Bonneville, and his *Essay on Free Masonry* was first published, in an expurgated form omitting offensive comments on Christianity, by Bonneville's widow, Paine's executrix, who had looked after him in his last illness.³¹³ The first unexpurgated version of

³¹³ Moncur Conway, *The Writings of Thomas Paine* (1896), 4, pp. 290-303. Paine's *Essay* was first published in its expurgated form in *The Theophilanthropist* (New York, 1810), and then as a separate pamphlet: *De L'Origine de la Franc-Maçonnerie, Ouvrage Posthume de Thomas Paine* (Paris, C.F. Patris, 1812). Pierre Mollier points out that, apart from Bonneville, Paine was also influenced by

Paine's *Essay* was published by Richard Carlile in 1818, shortly before he produced a cheap edition of *The Age of Reason*.³¹⁴ Carlile was prosecuted and sent to Dorchester gaol for publishing *The Age of Reason*. While he was in prison, Carlile wrote an exposure of Freemasonry which filled nearly a whole volume of his journal *The Republican*. This exposure was remarkable for its accuracy and comprehensiveness, including the ritual of many additional degrees which had never previously appeared in print.

In the form in which it appeared in *The Republican*, Carlile's exposure was a straightforward materialist attack on Freemasonry, mocking its secrecy and social pretensions, and seeking to undermine it by revealing its rituals. As Carlile proceeded with his work, however, he became convinced that masonic ritual hid religious truths, and that it illustrated how all religions consisted fundamentally of moral allegory. Carlile became determined to teach masons the true meaning of

Charles-François Dupuis, *Origine des tous les cultes* (1794), which was also afterwards cited as an influence by Carlile.

³¹⁴ The standard biography of Carlile is Joel H. Wiener, *Radicalism and Freethought in nineteenth-century Britain: the Life of Richard Carlile* (1983). Wiener is unusual among labour historians in that he gives full weight to Carlile's interest in Freemasonry. Carlile's *Manual of Freemasonry* is discussed in detail in the remarkable pioneering article by S.J. Fenton, 'Richard Carlile: His Life and masonic Writings', *AQC* 49 (1952). A talk by me discussing Carlile and Freemasonry is also available on the web site of the Centre for Research into Freemasonry at the University of Sheffield: www.shef.ac.uk/~crf.

Freemasonry. He was influenced in these views not only by Paine, but also by the writings of the pioneering student of comparative religion and social reformer, Godfrey Higgins, who became a freemason in order to find out how far its ritual concealed information about early religions.³¹⁵ Another major influence on Carlile was the renegade clergyman Robert Taylor, with whom Carlile became closely associated after his release from Dorchester gaol at the end of 1825.³¹⁶ As a young clergyman, Taylor had been won over to deism by a member of his congregation, and his mock sermons attacking Christianity earned him the title of 'The Devil's Chaplain'. Taylor was also convinced that all religions derived from sun worship and that Christianity, by substituting Christ for the sun, was blasphemous. He wrapped up these ideas in an elaborate panoply of spurious astrological and etymological learning.

³¹⁵ Godfrey Higgins, *Anacalypsis* (1836), 1, p. 712; in the opening paragraphs of *The Manual of Freemasonry*, Carlile states that 'The late Godfrey Higgins once observed to me, without explanation, that there were but two masons in England – himself and the Duke of Sussex. I put in a claim to be a third. He asked me to explain, on the condition that he was not to commit himself by any observation. I did so, as here set forth. He smiled and withdrew...'

³¹⁶ On Taylor, see I.D. McCalman, 'Popular Irreligion in early Victorian England: Infidel Preachers and Radical Theatricality in 1830s London' in *Religion and Irreligion in Victorian Society: Essays in Honour of R.K. Webb*, ed. R. W. Davis and R. J. Helmstadter (1992), pp. 51-67.

Together, Carlile and Taylor ran a series of extraordinary Sunday lectures on religion at the Rotunda in Blackfriars, which became a main centre of London radical activity during the period leading up to the Reform Act of 1832. Carlile was keen that Robert Taylor should bring his peculiar powers of textual analysis to bear on masonic ritual, and Taylor duly delivered four discourses on Freemasonry, which were printed by Carlile in his collection of Taylor's addresses, *The Devil's Pulpit*. The copy of *The Devil's Pulpit* in the Library and Museum of Freemasonry was published by Bradlaugh and Besant's Freethought Press in 1879.³¹⁷ To accompany Taylor's lectures, Carlile reissued the material from volume twelve of *The Republican* as a separate book, entitled *An Exposure of Freemasonry: or, a Mason's printed manual, with an introductory Keystone to the Royal Arch of Freemasonry*, considerably revising and refining his edition of the rituals.³¹⁸ Anxious to stress the allegorical meaning of Freemasonry, Carlile inserted new introductions, omitting the attacks on Freemasonry itself and stressing its spiritual interest. This work ran through many subsequent editions, being issued in a single volume in 1845 under the title *Manual of Freemasonry*, and remaining in print to the present day. Carlile's allegorical interpretation of Freemasonry

³¹⁷ The reprint was advertised in the *National Reformer*, (6 July 1879), p. 447, describing the book as 'The Famous Astronomico-Theological Discourse'.

³¹⁸ *The Prompter* (9, 16 and 23 April 1831).

was a very important thread in the development of his religious thought in his later years,³¹⁹ and also affected his views on political and social questions. His attacks on early trade unions and lack of sympathy for the Tolpuddle Martyrs were due to their use of oaths and ritual.³²⁰

Although Carlile's first wife, Jane, was willing to suffer prosecutions on his behalf and shared his imprisonment in Dorchester gaol, she found Carlile's religious and political campaigning difficult to bear and the marriage broke down. Elizabeth Sharples was an attractive and cultivated young woman from a well-to-do Lancashire family who became captivated by Carlile's ideas. She came to London to support Carlile in his work, and gave a remarkable series of lectures on women's rights at the Rotunda in 1832. Carlile and Elizabeth soon began an affair, and she became pregnant. Carlile declared that the two were joined together in a 'moral marriage', an action which horrified many of Carlile's

³¹⁹ See for example *Carlile's Political Register*, 1839, p. 64: 'The Manual of Freemasonry, published in three parts, is not only an accurate account of what passes in masonic lodges; but is a beautiful illustration of the mythological foundations of modern religions. ... The whole subject is the restoration of the most ancient science of the human mind. In a phrase – Mythology was Ancient Metaphysics.'

³²⁰ See for example *The Gauntlet* (9 March 1834); (23 March 1834). The last number of *The Gauntlet* includes a caricature of the initiation ceremony of the Tolpuddle Martyrs. Carlile advises the Tolpuddle unionists that if they want such nonsense, they can get it very cheaply in his *Manual of Freemasonry*.

supporters. Elizabeth bore three children by Carlile. Following his death in 1843, Elizabeth, as a common-law wife, was left in a very difficult situation, and was neglected even by the closest of Carlile's supporters. Eventually, some freethinking friends bought a large house in which a coffee shop and temperance hall were established, giving Elizabeth both a home and a potential source of income from the coffee shop. The coffeehouse, however, failed to prosper and Elizabeth remained desperately poor.³²¹ When she took in Bradlaugh, he had to share a bed with her eldest son, Julian. Nevertheless, Elizabeth was determined that her children should have a good education, and persuaded friends of Carlile to come and teach them. Bradlaugh enthusiastically joined in the family's educational endeavours.

Freemasonry loomed so large in Carlile's later thought that Bradlaugh would inevitably have heard about it from Elizabeth, and would certainly have encountered Carlile's *Manual of Freemasonry*. But Bradlaugh encountered Freemasonry at many other points in his radical education. The most important source of Bradlaugh's initial scepticism was Robert Taylor's work, *Diegesis*, which sought to prove 'the monks of Egypt the fabricators of the whole Christian system'.³²² Bradlaugh's early works drew extensively on Taylor, and he was doubtless acquainted with Taylor's colourful analysis of Freemasonry in *The Devil's Pulpit*.

³²¹ Tribe, *op. cit.*, pp. 21-2.

³²² *Ibid.*, pp. 20-1.

Bradlaugh was introduced by Austin Holyoake to his brother George, who had been a close associate of Carlile and had been imprisoned for blasphemy because of his opposition to the use of public money to build churches.³²³ Doubtless as a result of Carlile's influence, Holyoake was also intrigued by fraternal organisations. When the Oddfellows ran a competition for the composition of new lectures for use in their ceremonies, the winning entry was composed by Holyoake, to the great embarrassment of the Oddfellows.³²⁴ Holyoake's interest in Freemasonry is apparent from his proposal that the London secular guild should be a 'Freemasonry in freethought'.³²⁵

The strand in English radical thought represented by Paine, Carlile and Taylor was deeply interested in Freemasonry, and Bradlaugh encountered Freemasonry as a phenomenon of special interest at an early stage in his radical education. However, it was not these early influences which prompted Bradlaugh to become a freemason in 1859. It was instead the encouragement of French refugees who had fled to London after the revolution of 1848 and the *coup d'état* of Louis Napoleon in 1851.

³²³ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

³²⁴ Marsh, *op. cit.*, pp. 242-3.

³²⁵ G. J. Holyoake, *The Principles of Secularism Illustrated* (1874).

The *Loge Des Philosophes*

On 14 January 1858, as Napoleon III and his wife were on their way to the theatre, the Italian patriot Felice Orsini and three accomplices threw bombs at the Imperial carriage. The Emperor and Empress were unhurt, but several others were killed or wounded. Orsini had for many years been a prominent protestor against Napoleon's failure to support Italian independence. Bradlaugh had probably met Orsini in 1856, when he was in England lecturing on 'Austrian and Papal Tyranny in Italy'.³²⁶ Orsini's assassination attempt was greeted with outrage by the English press. The radical publisher Edward Truelove was arrested for publishing a pamphlet in support of Orsini, and, at the insistence of the French ambassador, the French émigré physician Simon Bernard was arrested for allegedly supplying guns and explosives to Orsini. Bradlaugh became Secretary of the Truelove Defence Committee and was himself watched by French spies. On one occasion, sitting in a restaurant with Bernard, Bradlaugh became suspicious of a man pretending to be asleep at the next table, and established that the man was indeed awake and watching him by holding a lighted spill under his nose. Meetings held by Bradlaugh in support of Bernard were closed by the police at the request of the French ambassador. Bradlaugh attended Bernard's trial with pockets full of sandwiches in case an attempt was made to bring pressure to bear on the jury by refusing them food. Such

³²⁶ Tribe, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

precautions, however, proved unnecessary, and Bernard was acquitted.³²⁷

Such experiences created a close bond between Bradlaugh and Bernard, and Bernard was Bradlaugh's sponsor when in March 1859, the year after Bernard's trial, Bradlaugh joined the masonic lodge which had been formed by French refugees in London, the *Grand Loge des Philadelphes*.³²⁸ An 1863 directory of the *Philadelphes* discovered by George Draffen³²⁹ confirms Bradlaugh's membership, and reveals that other members included the lawyer Montague Richard Leveson, who had acted as solicitor for Bernard and was afterwards a business partner of Bradlaugh. Presumably Leveson also joined the lodge at Bernard's instigation. Moreover, Austin Holyoake is also listed as a member of the lodge. Thus, the *Philadelphes* included three of the most prominent figures of the English freethought movement. The *Philadelphes* at that time met at the Eclectic Hall in Denmark Street, which was well known as a venue for freethought and radical meetings.

The history of the *Philadelphes* has been brilliantly reconstructed by Ellic Howe³³⁰ and, building on Howe's work and drawing on Lodge records in the Bibliothèque

Nationale, André Combes.³³¹ In 1850, a lodge of the Rite of Memphis, *Les Sectateurs de Ménès*, was founded in London. Despite the fact that a French-speaking lodge, *La Tolerance* No. 538, had been established in 1847 by refugee members of a Parisian lodge and warranted by United Grand Lodge,³³² *Les Sectateurs de Ménès* proved popular with the successive waves of French refugees who fled to London between 1848 and 1851, probably because its fees were less onerous than those set by the English Grand Lodge. A notable early success for *Les Sectateurs de Ménès* was the initiation of the prominent Socialist Louis Blanc.³³³ After Napoleon's *coup d'état*, the Rite of Memphis was suppressed in France, and in 1853 *Les Sectateurs de Ménès* became the Grand Lodge

³³¹ 'Des Origines du Rite de Memphis à la Grande loge des Philadelphes 1838-1870', *Chroniques d'Histoire Maçonnique* 34 no. 1 (1985), pp. 39-61; 'Les Philadelphes et les autres loges de Communards réfugiés à Londres 1871-80', *Chroniques d'Histoire Maçonnique* 34 no. 2 (1985), pp. 37-51. I am extremely grateful to Pierre Mollier for providing me with photocopies of these articles.

³³² Combes, 'Des origines du Rite de Memphis', p. 45. According to a note by John Hamill on the 'Rite of Memphis' subject file, this lodge was gradually taken over by French-speaking English Masons between 1863-6.

³³³ Combes, *op. cit.*, p. 46. In the *National Reformer* (10 December 1882), p. 417, Bradlaugh noted the death of Blanc: 'Louis Blanc was an honest earnest Frenchman. Except that we were both twenty four years ago members *des Philadelphes*, our paths have lain wide apart, but I claim – with the thousands of countrymen who will mourn at his tomb - my right to lay one white flower gently and in all reverence on the coffin which holds the dead'.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 55-6.

³²⁸ Charles Bradlaugh, *Letter to the Prince of Wales* (1869), p. 2.

³²⁹ *Annuaire pour l'exercice 1863-4 Orient de Londres* (1863). It was presented by Draffen in 1984 to The Library and Museum of Freemasonry in London, where it has the classmark BE 682 PHI: subject file 'Rite of Memphis'.

³³⁰ 'Fringe Masonry in England 1870-85, *AQC* 85 (1972); 'The Rite of Memphis in France and England 1838-70', *AQC* 92 (1978).

of the Order, taking the title *Grand Loge des Philadelphes*.³³⁴ Between 1853 and 1856, other lodges of the Rite of Memphis were opened in London (*Gymnosophistes*; *Fraternité des Peuples*; *Disciples d'Hermès*; *Conseil des Grands Régulateurs de la Maçonnerie*) and Birmingham (*L'Avenir*). As refugees belonging to the Rite of Memphis moved abroad, further daughter lodges of the *Philadelphes* were set up in New York, Belgium, Switzerland and Australia, where a masonic Temple was built at Ballarat.³³⁵

The Rite of Memphis contained 95 degrees. The French engraver Benoît Desquesnes, imprisoned and exiled because of his work as a member of a cooperative society and as Secretary of the *Société des Ouvriers Typographes du Nord*, was initiated in 1852 as a member of the *Philadelphes* in London under the Rite of Memphis, but argued that the superfluity of higher degrees was undemocratic and inconsistent with masonic ideals of equality. In 1856, Desquesnes published a beautiful lithographed *Vade Mecum* to illustrate his proposal for a Reformed Rite of Memphis containing just three degrees.³³⁶ Desquesnes's proposal was supported by many members of the *Philadelphes*. The Grand Master of the Rite of Memphis, Jean-Philibert Berjeau,

attempted to dissolve the *Philadelphes*, but they carried on regardless, adopting Desquesnes's simplified rite, and appointing as Master Edouard Benoît, a veteran of the workers' uprising in 1848. Thenceforth, the *Philadelphes* worked only three degrees, becoming to all intents and purposes indistinguishable from Craft Freemasonry. The *Gymnosophistes* in London and *L'Avenir* in Birmingham continued to operate under Berjeau's rule, retaining the Rite of Memphis. Despite a reduction in the number of degrees to 33 in 1860, these continuing lodges of the Rite of Memphis failed to prosper, and in 1866 Berjeau dissolved them, most of the members of the *Gymnosophistes* joining the *Philadelphes*.³³⁷

One of the first actions of the *Philadelphes* under Benoît's Mastership was to promulgate, on 8 April 1857, a new series of statutes, suppressing the higher degrees and implementing Desquesnes' new system. The first article read as follows:

'Freemasonry is an institution essentially philanthropic, philosophical and progressive. It has for its object the amelioration of mankind without any distinction of class, colour, or opinion either philosophical political or religious, for its unchangeable motto: Liberty, Equality, Fraternity.'

This deliberately echoed the first article used by the Grand Orient prior to the revision of its Constitutions in 1849, when a formulation giving greater prominence to belief in a supreme being was adopted. The second

³³⁴ For the chronology, see Combes, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

³³⁵ Combes, *op. cit.*, pp. 50-51.

³³⁶ *Vadé-Mecum de l'initié aux Trois Grades Symboliques d'Apprenti, de Compagnon et de Maître de la Maçonnerie Universelle* (Londres, 1856). A copy of the second volume is in the British Library: 1785.bb.57(4).

³³⁷ Combes, *op. cit.*, pp. 54-5.

article of the statutes of the *Philadelphes* declared that Freemasonry was composed of:

‘...free and equal men who submitting themselves to the laws conforming to their consciences, work by instruction for the reform of those who offend it.’

The work of the lodge was:

‘...exclusively consecrated to the development of human progress by the study of arts and sciences, and the practice of concord and tolerance.’

To qualify for membership it was necessary to be male, over eighteen, able to read and write, and of ‘irreproachable morality’. Masonic rights were lost on proof of a dishonourable act against the conscience or by breach of masonic fidelity. The first toast of the *Philadelphes* was ‘To the Oppressed of All Nations’. Other usages looked back to the Rite of Memphis. Diplomas issued by the *Philadelphes* at this time bore the inscription ‘*A la Gloire du Sublime Architecte du Monde*’.³³⁸

Shortly after these reforms, the *Philadelphes* established two daughter lodges in working class areas of London well known as centres of working class

³³⁸ Copies of the first two editions of the statutes are in The Library and Museum of Freemasonry, under the classmark BE 680 PHI.

radicalism and freethought, Stratford and Woolwich.³³⁹ The Woolwich lodge was named Progress and the Stratford lodge Equality. All the members of the Stratford lodge were English in 1863, chiefly workers connected with the large railway works there.³⁴⁰ The Woolwich lodge was also apparently largely composed of English members. Sometime after 1863, another lodge was established in central London, meeting at Dean Street in Soho, which was named *La Concorde*.³⁴¹

In 1859, an enquiry was received by *The Freemasons’ Magazine* as to the nature of the ‘Grand Orient of Memphis’ in London. The editor replied that such a body supposedly met in London but had nothing to do with the Freemasons of England and had been established by refugees for political purposes: ‘It is in fact nothing but an illegal secret society’.³⁴² The *Philadelphes* sent an elaborate official communication to the Editor of *The Freemasons’ Magazine*.³⁴³ They explained that their

³³⁹ Both Stratford and Woolwich had very active secular and freethought societies whose proceedings were regularly reported in the *National Reformer*. P. Le Lubez, who held offices in various Lodges associated with the *Philadelphes* was active in the Stratford secular society.

³⁴⁰ George Draffen, in a letter to John Hamill of 29 July 1984, comments that ‘The membership list could well have passed for a Scottish lodge on Clydesdale at the same date’: Subject File ‘Rite of Memphis’.

³⁴¹ Combes, *op. cit.*, pp. 52, 55.

³⁴² *The Freemasons’ Magazine*, 9 March 1859, pp. 450-1.

³⁴³ *Op. cit.* (1 June 1859), pp. 1031-4: ‘The document which follows is neatly written on a large sheet of parchment, adorned with

Order had been regularly established and acknowledged in France, but had been driven into exile as a result of the *coup d'état*. The *Philadelphes* said that they hoped that English masonic doors were not closed to brothers driven into exile. They stressed that their meetings had been attended by several English masons, and that they had not initiated anyone unworthy of the honour. Members of the Order had visited masonic lodges in England, France and America, and had always received a warm welcome.

‘What can you reproach us with? Is it with our having wished that Masonry should not be the exclusive privilege of the high classes, with having endeavoured to render the initiation accessible to the working man, by lowering the too heavy fees which the English lodges impose upon their members?’

In response, *The Freemasons' Magazine* reiterated that, according to English law, the *Philadelphes* were an illegal secret society. Desquesnes wrote back in his capacity as Secretary, saying that if they had broken the law it was for want of knowing it, and going on to add:

‘We have used in this letter the word excommunication to characterize the penalty with which you threaten English brothers that may visit our lodges. This really smells strongly of the inquisition, and indeed you go beyond the holy society; for you denounce as heretics without going to the trouble of inquiring into our doctrines, and you issue an interdiction against all masons that

masonic emblems, apparently one used for the certificates of the “Order of Memphis”. It has the following heading, ‘*Au nom du G. conseil Gen. de l'Ordre Maç. Réformé de Memphis, sous les auspices de la G. Loge des Philadelphes, à tous les Maçons répandus sur les deux Hémispheres; Salut, Amitié, Prospérité, Courage, Tolérance...*’

may be visiting us in order to judge of our merits by themselves. You must acknowledge that this is contrary to the spirit of Masonry. England has left far behind her the days of Henry the VIII, and those of the bloody Mary. The spirit of tolerance and of free examination exists in all her institutions, and we cannot believe that amongst the great bodies of this country, Masonry has alone refused to follow the steps of progress.’³⁴⁴

In this way Desquesnes raised a theme which was constantly to recur in the dispute first with the *Philadelphes* and afterwards with the Grand Orient, namely the allegation that English Freemasonry was narrow-minded and intolerant, and far too ready to make papal-style excommunications.

The *Philadelphes* had already caused trouble at Great Queen Street. In January 1859, a gentleman called Stortz had written to the Grand Secretary from Liverpool saying that he had been made and raised to the third degree by the *Grand Loge des Philadelphes*, and asking if he was now allowed to join an English lodge.³⁴⁵ The following month, Robert Clamp, a mason for more than thirty years, and a Past Master of British Union Lodge No. 114 of Ipswich, was staying on business in Stratford. Hearing that a masonic lodge was meeting at an inn there, he presented himself for admission. He was examined by a member of the lodge, who was satisfied with the result. However, the Master sent word to say that he could not possibly admit Brother Clamp without seeing his certificate. Clamp replied that, in common with most

³⁴⁴ *The Freemasons' Magazine* (27 August 1859), pp. 150-1.

³⁴⁵ Original letter in subject file, ‘Rite of Memphis’.

other masons, his certificate was framed and hanging in his room at home, but the Master was adamant that Clamp should present his certificate, so the distinguished Ipswich brother was refused entry. Infuriated, Clamp wrote to the Grand Secretary, asking if the Master had been justified in its actions. He also enquired as to the legality of the lodge, 'being held as the members state under a warrant from the American Grand Lodge'. He was right in his suspicions. The lodge was Equality, held under a warrant from the *Philadelphes*.³⁴⁶

The Board of General Purposes was stung into action. On 24 October 1859, a circular was issued by the Grand Secretary pointing out that the lodge calling itself 'The Reformed Masonic Order of Memphis, or Rite of the Grand Lodge of Philadelphs' [*sic*]' holding its meetings at Stratford in Essex was spurious. No member of this body was to be admitted to a regular lodge, and English brethren were to have no contact with it, under penalty of expulsion and liability under the 1799 Unlawful Societies Act.³⁴⁷ This prompted a remarkable protest to the Board of General Purposes by the lodge at Stratford, partly printed by Ellic Howe.³⁴⁸ It explained that the area around Stratford contained thousands of skilled mechanics, artisans and engineers, many of whom travelled abroad in connection with their work, and who

would therefore find membership of Freemasonry beneficial. Various attempts had been made to establish a lodge under the Grand Lodge of England, but it had been impossible to create an English lodge at Stratford because of the large sums of money required for initiations and raisings. The officers of Equality Lodge went on:

'The matter would probably have rested there, had it not happened that some eighteen months since that several parties now brethren of this lodge were brought into communication with a number of foreign brothers meeting in London and holding a Warrant from the 'Grand Empire of Memphis'. After several conferences and much consideration our present temple was opened and consecrated on the last festival of St John and its labours have been conducted from that period with a success beyond previous anticipation. The works are opened, carried on and closed, with all the formula, decorum and as we trust the true spirit of Masonry, which as we have been taught is like Christianity, universal in its application, in its language and in its aims, and recognizes no distinction of creed or country. We feel honoured therefore by our association with those intellectual and honourable men to whom we owe our existence as a body, we sympathize with their misfortunes, and regret the causes that have made them exiles from their native land.'

The Board was rattled by this fierce response from the Stratford lodge. In February 1860, Lord Zetland as Grand Master wrote a very circumlocutory letter to Prince Lucien Murat, the Grand Master of the Grand Orient.³⁴⁹ Zetland carefully reviewed the evidence relating to the Stratford Lodge and to the *Philadelphes*, and hastened to assure Murat that he believed they had no authority from

³⁴⁶ Original letter in subject file, 'Rite of Memphis'.

³⁴⁷ Copy of circular on subject file, 'Rite of Memphis'.

³⁴⁸ 'Fringe Masonry', pp. 245-6. The original letter from Equality Lodge is on the 'Rite of Memphis' subject file.

³⁴⁹ Historical Correspondence (Foreign).

the Grand Orient of France, and that English masons ‘disclaim any sort of connection or intercourse with them’. Zetland assured Murat he was writing simply because he was anxious to let the French Grand Lodge know what had been going on. The *Philadelphes* evidently got wind of these denunciations by the English Grand Lodge to Grand Lodges abroad, and in December 1860 they issued a pamphlet entitled *Masonic Intolerance*, a ferocious denunciation of the English Grand Lodge.³⁵⁰

The pamphlet was published by Edward Truelove, the publisher who had been prosecuted for producing a pamphlet in support of Orsini, and who handled some of Bradlaugh’s most controversial pamphlets.³⁵¹ The pamphlet opens by assuring the Grand Lodge of England that, despite all its efforts, ‘major excommunication, official denunciations to all friendly lodges, throughout all Europe’, the Grand Lodge of *Philadelphes* had not been extinguished. The pamphlet reviewed yet again what the *Philadelphes* felt to be the facts of the situation,

³⁵⁰ Noted by Howe, ‘Rite of Memphis’, pp. 6-7. The pamphlet is in the British Library, pressmark 4784.aa.38(7).

³⁵¹ The author’s address is given as Clear View Cottage, St Lawrence, Jersey, and the printer used was also from Jersey. A Lodge, *Amis de l’Avenir*, had been established in Jersey by French refugees in 1862, but had been refused recognition by the Provincial Grand Master because of its refusal to use a bible: Combes, *op. cit.*, pp. 59-60. Probably members of this Lodge were involved in the production of *Masonic Intolerance*.

seeking to refute suggestions that, because it contained so many refugees, it was of a political character:

‘We do not deny our having received amongst us the flotsons [*sic*] of the wreck of 1851; aye, we glory in it. And why not? Is not England proud of having afforded an inviolable shelter to the exiles of all nations? And *you Masons* ought to be ashamed of being less liberal and more selfish than the profane...And what would it come to, if in the name of Masonry such accusations could be brought against us? At what period, at what time of political strife, when did Masonry close her doors against a persecuted thinker, against a vanquished party? Does it make a distinction between the victor and the vanquished? Are there for Masonry, masters and outcasts, republicans and royalists? Has it not throughout all ages opened its temples to men of all opinions?’

The *Philadelphes* accused the Grand Lodge of cowardice and of an act worthy of the age of intolerance and superstition. They denied that the lodge engaged in politics, if politics meant the ‘infernal diplomacy’ of a Talleyrand or Metternich. However, they freely admitted that the lodge engaged in the philosophical study of questions which might ensure the triumph of justice and brotherhood. Although such politics might not be the object of speculative study in English Freemasonry, the pamphlet argued that nevertheless they were put into daily practice by the great charitable institutions of English Freemasonry, a ‘material proclamation of the duty for the strong to help the weak’. Why, asked the *Philadelphes*, had the Grand Lodge suddenly decided to strike against them?

‘Two years ago we founded at Stratford a lodge of our order, totally composed of English elements. This was shooting on your ground. Blinded by passion, you did not perceive that we were completing your work; that English Masonry, imposing heavy expenses upon its members, was unapproachable to the honest and industrious working man, and thus deprived him of a means of mental improvement and moralisation; that it thus maintains the distinction of classes, and makes of an essentially universal institution for the benefit of mankind, something exclusive, selfish, and we may say dangerous. We had endeavoured to fill up the vacancy, and improve upon your work; but vanity has dimmed your minds – you have trembled for your privileges – you have only considered the material view of the case, the sinking of your funds; and you have raised a hue and cry against those whose object was to instil young and vigorous blood in your exhausted veins.

Having violated the principles of Masonry, you have logically fallen from precipice to precipice. You have turned your back to progress, to your country, to tradition, to the nineteenth century, to play the part of the holy inquisition, the Pope, the Jesuits ... Those sacramental forms of excommunication, that infallibility of Rome she has so much and so often ridiculed, the Grand Lodge of England has invoked them against brothers she has declared to be heretics.

Indeed, your conduct is a real crime against Masonry. You have taken that ancient institution, the mission of which is to instruct and moralize the ignorant, and raise them to the level of man; to efface the distinction of classes, to prepare by peaceable means the social regeneration, and to be the vanguard of progress, an institution which is nothing if it be not this; and you have made it a sort of tontine, of insurance company, of society for festivals and funeral poms, as if those things did not exist in society without you, and better conducted than by you. Away with such; your mourners are ridiculous, and your banquets uninteresting. The insurance companies pay regularly a higher premium than yours. If such be the object of Masonry, let it disappear. Its existence is useless.

Yes, you must introduce Reform to your institution. Else, it is nothing but a corpse. May the sight of what is taking place in your country open your eyes. Meditate on that slow but continuous, steady, and progressive movement which maintains it at the head of civilization. It is what you reject, Reform. You meet it everywhere: in the administration, the army, the navy, commerce, and industry, in

civil and political legislation: you perceive reform and progress in every direction. And is it anything else that protects England against revolutions? You, Grand Lodge, alone do not understand the requirements of the day.

The *Philadelphes* pointed out that in just ten years, they had initiated over 300 people, founded lodges in Belgium, Switzerland and England, and raised the first Temple at Ballarat in Australia. Although an impoverished single lodge, they claimed to have achieved almost as much as the English Grand Lodge in the same period. *Masonic Intolerance* is a remarkable document. It is stated that the author lived in Jersey, but the pamphlet was issued in the name of the officers of the *Philadelphes*, and doubtless English members such as Bradlaugh and Austin Holyoake played a part in helping to draft it. *Masonic Intolerance* encapsulated many of the criticisms of English Freemasonry which were to be increasingly repeated in French masonic journals and elsewhere during the years leading up to the crisis of 1877-8. This partly reflects the role played by the *Philadelphes* in supporting and encouraging the reformist Republican wing within French Freemasonry between 1870 and 1877.

The heavy-handed Grand Mastership of Prince Lucien Murat came to an end in 1861. An attempt to elect as Murat's successor the liberally-minded heir to the Imperial Throne, Prince Napoleon, known jocularly as 'Plon Plon', resulted in chaos, so that the meeting to elect the new Grand Master was prevented by order of the police. The new French Grand Master was instead

nominated by an Imperial decree, enforced by the Minister of the Interior. He was Marshal Magnan, not at that time a mason. The Grand Mastership of Marshal Magnan was inevitably turbulent, with many lodges closed down because of their Republican activity, but nevertheless Magnan's rule was less oppressive than that of Murat, reflecting the more liberal tone of the later years of Napoleon III's rule.³⁵² The *Philadelphes*, spurned by the Grand Lodge of England, increasingly sought to build up closer contact with their French brethren.

In 1862, Bradlaugh served as *Orateur* of the *Philadelphes*. In August of that year, he gave a lecture on 'Freemasonry' under the auspices of the lodge in aid of the family of a deceased brother. In November 1862 Bradlaugh was among the officers of the *Philadelphes* who presented the Lord Mayor of London with a donation of fourteen pounds five shillings (including nine pounds from Garibaldi) to the fund for the relief of workers affected by the cotton famine in Lancashire.³⁵³ During 1862, the *Philadelphes* made charitable donations of more than 3000 francs, and had some 1500 francs remaining in their account in May 1863.³⁵⁴ In the same year, an International Exhibition was held in London and

there were many French visitors in the city, including an elected delegation of French workers, whose trip was sponsored by Napoleon, despite the misgivings of the Prefect of Police in Paris. The *Philadelphes* opened a free information office in Holborn for French masonic visitors to London. The office was staffed by members of the *Philadelphes*, who acted as interpreters and guides for visiting brethren and gave them any other assistance they needed.³⁵⁵ This initiative proved a great success and, as a result of friendships formed through this work, a number of French lodges became affiliated to the *Philadelphes*. By 1863, these included five lodges in Paris (*Persévérante Amitié*; *Saint-Pierre des Acacias*; *Bonaparte*; *La France Maçonnique*; and *Le Temple des Familles*), two in Bordeaux (*Amis Réunis* and *La Candeur*) and one in Verviers in Belgium (*Les Libres Penseurs*).³⁵⁶ It was doubtless as a result of these

³⁵² Pierre Chevalier, *Histoire de la Franc-Maçonnerie Française* (Paris, 1974), 2, pp. 396-411.

³⁵³ Hypatia Bradlaugh afterwards Bonner, *op. cit.*, p. 203.

³⁵⁴ Photocopy of circular of 18 May 1863 in Bibliothèque Nationale: 'Rite of Memphis' subject file.

³⁵⁵ Combes, *op. cit.*, p. 56; circular of 18 May 1863 on 'Rite of Memphis' subject file. French refugees in London organized a number of social events for French visitors during the Exhibition. These included a soirée held at the Freemasons' Tavern. These events laid the basis for the establishment of the First International, in which some members of the *Philadelphes*, such as Le Lubez, took a prominent part: Combes, *op. cit.*, p. 57; Henry Collins and Chimen Abramsky, *Karl Marx and the British Labour Movement: Years of the First International* (1965), pp. 26-8 (these meetings presumably took place at the Freemasons' Tavern, not Freemasons' Hall).

³⁵⁶ These affiliations are listed in the 1863 directory in The Library and Museum of Freemasonry. A recent study of the lodge in Verviers is Armand de Hagen, *Maçonnerie et Politique au XIXe siècle, la Loge Verviétoise de 'Philadelphes'* (Brussels, 1986).

affiliations in the wake of the 1862 International Exhibition that Desquesnes, Bradlaugh and others became members of *La Persévérante Amitié*.³⁵⁷

The *Philadelphes* circulated French lodges, seeking further affiliations.³⁵⁸ They explained that the aim of their lodge was to spread among the English nation, and particularly the working classes, the spirit of French Freemasonry and its principles of solidarity and fraternity. They declared that the true spirit of Freemasonry was not to be found in English Freemasonry, which was a body without a soul:

‘Ses travaux sont consacrés a quelques momeries, et surtout à la gourmandaise.’

This was, in the view of the *Philadelphes*, due to the influence of the church on English Freemasonry. It pointed out that the functions which were undertaken in France by the *Orateur* were in England fulfilled by a clergyman. The result was a kind of Jesuitism; although English Freemasonry had built great institutions for its children, the elderly and the infirm, these were closed to anyone who did not believe in God or was a republican, while the masonic schools did not offer a purely secular

³⁵⁷ Benoît Desquesnes, *Esquisse Autobiographique* (1888), p. 22. Desquesnes also describes (p. 24) a reception thrown by the *Philadelphes* for Garibaldi in 1864.

³⁵⁸ A copy of a circular dated 18 May 1863 in the Bibliothèque Nationale is on the ‘Rite of Memphis’ subject file in The Library and Museum of Freemasonry.

education. Above all, English Freemasonry was simply too expensive for the ordinary man. The *Philadelphes* intended to show the English Grand Lodge the error of its ways by seeking affiliations from as many foreign lodges as possible. Having been barred from English masonic temples, they would seek succour from French Freemasonry, and help spread its values in England.

The most important achievement of the *Philadelphes* was the establishment in 1864 of their own journal, *La Chaîne d’Union*.³⁵⁹ One of the members of the lodge was a printer, based in Islington, François Tafery, originally from Fontenay-le-Comte, where he had published a revolutionary journal, *L’Oeil du Peuple*. Tafery seems to have been the prime force behind the establishment of *La Chaîne d’Union* and bore most of the trials and tribulations of its early publication.³⁶⁰ The first editor of the journal was a former treasurer and Master of the *Philadelphes*, Prosper Simard, an accountant whose premises in Holborn had housed the lodge’s 1862 information office.³⁶¹ *La Chaîne d’Union* was widely read in France where it soon became a mainstream masonic periodical. Its respectable character in France is reflected in the fact that from the time of its foundation

³⁵⁹ Combes, *op. cit.*, p. 56; *La Chaîne d’Union* 1 January 1870, p. 113. The first London correspondent of *La Chaîne d’Union* after its publication transferred to Paris was Prosper Simard, a member of the *Philadelphes* who had been the first editor of the journal in London: *La Chaîne d’Union* 5 (1869), p. 25.

³⁶⁰ Combes, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

³⁶¹ ‘Rite of Memphis’ subject file.

its French correspondent was Esprit-Eugène Hubert, who, although he had been dismissed in a brutal fashion from his post as Secretary-General of the Grand Orient by the new Grand Master Prince Murat shortly after the *coup d'état*, was nevertheless one of the most widely respected and influential French masons.³⁶² On Tafery's death in 1868, Léon Clerc and J. Nancy, at that time Secretary of the *Philadelphes*, took over the publication, but were obliged to give up a year later. At this point, Hubert took over the periodical, switching its publication to Paris. Hubert edited *La Chaîne d'Union* until his death in 1882, establishing it as the pre-eminent French masonic periodical. It is still published, and is undoubtedly the most enduring legacy of the *Philadelphes*.

Increasingly, the *Philadelphes* were treated by lodges abroad, particularly in France, as if they were a regular Craft lodge, notwithstanding the prohibition issued by the English Grand Lodge. As a result of their circulars among French Lodges and the publication of *La Chaîne d'Union*, the criticisms of English Freemasonry made by the *Philadelphes* became more widespread in France during the period 1864-9, but English Freemasonry was largely unaware of this. Charles Bradlaugh's distinctive contribution to the mission of the *Philadelphes* was to seek to make their view of English Freemasonry more widely known in England itself.

³⁶² Hubert had been a member of the governing body of the Rite of Memphis in France after 1848: Combes, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

In 1864, the *Concorde* Lodge had considered abandoning references to the Great Architect of the Universe, and consecrating itself 'A la gloire de l'Humanité'. It is not known whether this proposal was implemented. On 7 November 1866, however, the *Philadelphes*, by a large majority, agreed to open their works 'Au nom de la Raison et de la Fraternité Universelle'.³⁶³ In January 1868, it was decided to merge the two London lodges, which became known as *Les Philadelphes et Concorde Réunis*. Its first Master was Benoît, who was however upbraided by some members of the lodge for supposedly trying to retain the title of Grand Master beyond the statutory term. Consequently, a minority decided to keep the old *Philadelphes* lodge in existence, so that, confusingly, there were soon again two London lodges: *Les Philadelphes* and *Les Philadelphes et Concorde Réunis*.³⁶⁴ The Stratford and Woolwich Lodges continued to thrive, and a stray 1869 certificate records that a further lodge, *L'Espérance*, was established in Bristol.³⁶⁵ The charitable work of these lodges among the French community in London also continued. For example, members of the lodge assisted in the establishment of a French dispensary in London.³⁶⁶

³⁶³ Combes, *op. cit.*, pp. 57-8.

³⁶⁴ Combes, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

³⁶⁵ It is in the document collection at The Library and Museum of Freemasonry.

³⁶⁶ Combes, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

A Letter from a freemason to The Prince of Wales

The initiation of The Prince of Wales as a freemason in Sweden created a problem for English Freemasonry as to which rank he should be accorded. The precedent of George IV suggested the title of Grand Patron, and this was indeed the course adopted in Scotland. However, the United Grand Lodge of England felt it was more in keeping with the dignity of Prince Albert Edward that he should be made a Past Grand Master. The idea that a neophyte should immediately be given such an exalted rank caused some mild protests from English Masons. A correspondent wrote to *The Freemason* calling into question:

‘...the equity of promoting to the high dignity of PGM any personage who had not obtained that honour by passing through the trodden curriculum.’³⁶⁷

When the matter was discussed at Grand Lodge, that cantankerous stickler for masonic etiquette, Matthew Cooke, the first editor of the celebrated Cooke Manuscript, protested that the creation of a Past Grand Master was based on relatively recent powers, and argued that a rank of Grand Patron would be more appropriate. Appropriate reassurances were given, and the Prince became a Past Grand Master.³⁶⁸

³⁶⁷ *The Freemason* (12 June 1869), p. 7.

³⁶⁸ *Op. cit.* (4 September 1869), pp. 115-6.

On 13 June 1869, a leading article appeared in the *National Reformer*, signed ‘A Free and Accepted Mason’, which represented Bradlaugh’s first foray into masonic journalism.³⁶⁹ It was reprinted by Bradlaugh and Besant in a slightly expanded form as a separate booklet, and, selling for a penny, ran through two editions.³⁷⁰ The *Letter to The Prince of Wales* is a prime example of Bradlaugh’s republican rhetoric. In its separate booklet form it begins with a supercilious listing of the Prince’s titles, and an apology if any have been missed out:

‘I have never before written to a Prince, and may lack good manners in thus inditing; but to my brother masons I have often written, and know they love best a plain, fraternal greeting, if the purpose of the epistle be honest.’

So, declared Bradlaugh, they are brothers – voluntarily on the Prince’s part, unsought for on Bradlaugh’s.

‘You, though a Past Grand Master, are but recently a free and accepted master mason, and probably yet know but little of the grand traditions of the mighty organisation whose temple doors have opened to your appeal. My knowledge of the mystic branch gained amongst republicans of all nations is of some years’ older date. You are now, as a freemason, excommunicate by the Pope – so am I ... You have entered into that illustrious fraternity which has numbered in its ranks Swedenborg, Voltaire and Garibaldi...My sponsor was Simon Bernard - yours, I hear, was the King of Sweden.’

³⁶⁹ *National Reformer* 13 June 1869, pp. 369-70.

³⁷⁰ A copy is in the British Library, pressmark 4782.f.5(9).

Sir Henry Ponsonby, the Queen's Private Secretary, in describing to Queen Victoria Bradlaugh's attacks on The Prince of Wales, noted how Bradlaugh very carefully avoided saying anything actionable.³⁷¹ Bradlaugh's tactics are vividly illustrated by the *Letter*. He notes how some Princes of Wales had been 'drunken riotous spendthrifts, covered in debt, and deep in dishonour', but then hastens to add that he was sure this was not true of the present Prince, an erudite member of the Royal Geographical Society and sober support of the Worshipful Company of Fishmongers. Bradlaugh recalls that the Prince Regent was accused of quitting his wife for the endearments of a wanton, and toying the night away in debauchery. He expresses relief that Prince Albert Edward was instead an English gentleman, a good and kind husband, and that with him a woman's honour was always safe from attack and sure of protection.

'Fame writes you as sober and chaste, as high-minded and generous, as kind-hearted and truthful. These are the qualities, oh Albert Edward, which hid your disability as Prince, when you knelt bare-kneed in our audience chamber. The brethren who opened your eyes to the light, overlooked your title as Prince of Wales in favour of your already famous manhood. Your career is a pleasant contrast to that of George Prince of Wales.'

Bradlaugh then goes on to outline his vision of Freemasonry to the novice Past Grand Master:

³⁷¹ Frank Prochaska, *The Republic of Britain 1760-2000* (2000), p. 129.

'I address this epistle to you as fellow-member of a body which teaches that man is higher than king; that humanity is beyond church and creed; that true thought is nobler than blind faith, and that virile, earnest effort is better than dead or submissive serfdom ... Freemasonry is democracy, are you a Democrat? Freemasonry is Freethought, are you a Freethinker? Freemasonry is work for human deliverance, are you a worker? I know you may tell me in England of wine-bibbing, song-singing, meat-eating, and white kid-glove wearing fashionables who say 'Shibboleth', make 'royal salutes', and call this Freemasonry; but these are mere badge-wearers, who lift their legs awkwardly over the coffin in which truth lies buried...'

Bradlaugh suggests that 'instead of going, with some German glutton, to a paltry casino', the Prince should see how masonic lodges throughout Europe had worked for liberty in countries like Italy and Poland. Above all, declared Bradlaugh, the Prince should visit France, where for the past twenty years masonic lodges had been the only institutions where civil and religious liberty had been preached,

'...the greatest enemies of the falling churches, the bravest teachers of heretic thought, and the most earnest inculcators of Republican earnestness.'

The Prince had joined Freemasonry at the right moment, for true Freemasonry was about to become more powerful than royalty. In Spain, Freemasonry was supporting a new republic. In Italy, where Garibaldi was the Grand Master, 'today they dream of a government without a monarch'. In France, the Emperor's days were numbered, and Bradlaugh hoped that the republic of united Germany was not far away. Even in England, they

had almost forgotten what a Queen was used for, now she had disappeared from public sight.

‘*Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité*, form the masonic trinity in unity. Do you believe in this trinity? Which will you be, prince or man?... In Freemasonry there are no princes; the only nobles in its true peerage muster-rolls must be noble men – men noble in thought, noble in effort, noble in endurance... In our Masonry there are no kings save in the kingship of manhood, “*Tous les hommes sont rois*”.’

If the Prince was to be a man, he needed to move among the common people:

‘Go to Ireland – not to Punchestown races, at a cost to the people of more than two thousand pounds – but secretly amongst its poor, and learn their deep griefs. Walk in London, not in parade at its horse shows, where snobs bow and stumble, but in plain dress and unattended; in its Spitalfields, Bethnal Green, Isle of Dogs, and Seven Dials; go where the unemployed commence to cry in vain for bread, where hunger begins to leave its dead in the open streets, and try to find out why so many starve.’

Bradlaugh concluded by assuring the Prince that, before he died, he would hear cries for a republic in England. The cries for a republic now increasingly being heard in France would create a lightning flash of indignation which would stir all peoples. As a freemason, concluded Bradlaugh, the Prince was bound to promote peace, even when it showed the weakness of princes. As a freemason, the Prince was bound to help the oppressed, even against princes. As a freemason, he was bound to educate the ignorant, even when this meant teaching them that royal authority springs from the people.

‘As a freemason you are bound to encourage freethought, but freethought is at war with the church, and between church and crown there has ever been the most unholy alliance against peoples. You were a prince by birth, it was your misfortune. You have enrolled yourself as a freemason by choice, it shall be either your virtue or your crime – your virtue if you are true to its manly dutifulness; your crime if you dream that your blood royalty is of richer quality than the poorest drop in the veins of A Free and Accepted Mason.’

The Freemason, then in its first year of publication, almost immediately fell into the trap carefully laid by Bradlaugh, without apparently realising Bradlaugh’s involvement in this publication.³⁷² It noticed a report in an American masonic journal stating that:

‘The Prince of Wales having become a freemason, a brother mason takes the privilege of the Order to write him a letter, assuring him, that if he does not reform the course of his life, the English people will never endure him as a ruler.’

‘This item of news is one of the most mendacious ever penned’, thundered *The Freemason*.

‘No member of the English Craft, however distinguished, would venture to soar to such a sublime height of audacity as that indicated, simply because we are not so credulous as to believe the absurd rumours which daily circle round the lives and actions of our great men. It is a delicate subject to handle, but one thing is clear, that Freemasonry ought never to be coupled, even in a newspaper paragraph, with such an atrocious calumny. We are no apologist for evil doings in high places, but we draw a wide distinction between well-authenticated evidence and the scandals of table-talk.’

³⁷² *The Freemason* (28 August 1869), p. 1.

Bradlaugh had, of course, gone out of his way to avoid directly suggesting that Albert Edward was another Prince Regent. By hotly denying that there was any resemblance between the two, *The Freemason* had given the game away, and admitted that such rumours were indeed circulating.

Bradlaugh's mother lodge was delighted by his *Letter*, and the *National Reformer* duly carried a copy of the following formal letter of congratulation to Bradlaugh from the *Philadelphes et Concorde Réunis*.³⁷³

'The Lodge took no immediate action on account of the absence of the Ven. Master, but, on his return, he soon found that some eloquent and thrilling expression had been given to the true principles of universal Freemasonry ... and proposed that we should send you our fraternal greeting for your many services to the cause of freedom and of human progress, that being true masonic work; and especially for your letter to our Brother Albert Edward, known as the Prince of Wales.

We must join to our thanks the request that you produce more of such pieces of architecture; that will compensate us for your absence from lodge on many occasions when we should like to see you there with us.

You have shown by your "Letter" that, though you are a member of some national lodges, you really belong to UNIVERSAL FREEMASONRY, of which our lodge forms a part. You work for the oppressed, and would not drink to an oppressor, be he King of Prussia or Italy, or Emperor of France. You have never seen in our lodge either a Veda, a Koran, or a Bible: that would be *anti-masonic*, and so is flunkeyism. You have truly said: "Freemasonry is Democracy: Freemasonry is Freethought". We meet "on the level" as brothers, and no one is above another.

We do not even open our works by an invocation to the Great Architect of the Universe, because we know nothing of such an

³⁷³ *National Reformer* (8 August 1869), p. 85.

architect, and to speak of giving him glory would appear, to those who believe in it, as if we had some glory to spare, and he had not enough of it. That might appear ridiculous to some of our brothers, and might be offensive to others. We meet "in the name of Justice and of Reason", which all freemasons recognize as guides.'

The letter concluded by saying that the lodge had learnt with pleasure that Bradlaugh was being given a complimentary supper. The lodge had voted unanimously that a deputation of at least three of its members would attend in its name and express to Bradlaugh how much the lodge admired his noble, manly and masonic virtues. The number of the *National Reformer* also carried an advertisement for *La Chaîne d'Union, 'Journal de la Franc-Maçonnerie universelle, de la liberté de conscience, et de toutes les reformes sociales'*.³⁷⁴ The complimentary dinner for Bradlaugh to celebrate his defeat of the attempts to prosecute the *National Reformer* took place in the Old Street Hall of Science a week later.³⁷⁵ Over 140 guests attended, with Austin Holyoake chairing proceedings. Prominent among the diners was a delegation from the *Philadelphes et Concorde Réunis*, led by Le Lubez, a republican from the Channel Islands and a member of the First International (where he unsuccessfully locked horns with Marx).³⁷⁶

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

³⁷⁵ *Op. cit.* (15 August 1869), p. 97.

³⁷⁶ On Le Lubez, see further Collins and Abramsky, *op. cit.*, pp. 26, 28, 32-3, 35-7, 40-4, 60, 64-5, 67, 101-3, 110-3, 165, 182, 190, 206, 237, 285; Tribe, *op. cit.*, pp. 125-6, 188, 212.

Bradlaugh took to heart the request of his mother lodge that he should undertake further pieces of such architecture as the *Letter to the Prince of Wales*. On 19 September 1869, Bradlaugh's Sunday lecture at the Hall of Science was devoted to Freemasonry, attracting a large audience and being reported in the *National Reformer*.³⁷⁷ Bradlaugh drew a contrast between on the one hand English Freemasonry, which he argued had wielded little influence and not contributed significantly to the development of national freedom, and on the other continental Freemasonry, which he argued had provided an important means of combating tyranny. He declared that, although Freemasonry, with its belief in a Great Architect of the Universe and a 'Future State' had in the past been essentially deistic, it now represented the most advanced views.

'Religion is ever narrow and sectarian; Freemasonry broad and cosmopolitan. The latter has outgrown its theological formularies, and many lodges have expunged from their rules the requirements that their members should subscribe to a belief in a "Great Architect of the Universe"... They inculcate love of humanity, national freedom, and individual justice. But in England Freemasonry means a gathering of respectable society with but little purpose beyond the distribution of charity, or the conferring of one of its highest honours upon an undeserving prince.'

This piece again caught the attention of *The Freemason*, and a contributor under the *nom-de-plume*

³⁷⁷ By W. Willis: *National Reformer* (26 September 1869), p. 204.

'Cryptonymous', who seems to have been Kenneth R. H. Mackenzie, discussed Bradlaugh's ideas in a piece called 'Masonry and Secularism'.³⁷⁸ Mackenzie was unaware that Bradlaugh at this time held certificates as a master mason from both English Grand Lodge and the Grand Orient, and described Bradlaugh's comments as unfair and ill-informed: 'As a lecturer he speaks ex cathedra of what he scarcely can know, or knowing should not utter.'

Mackenzie asked if there:

'...is not a dogmatism of materialism equally at variance with common sense as the dogmatism of infallibility?...such a method of seeking truth, I must individually opine, is even more offensive than the a priori arguments used by the sandalled surrounders of monkish traditions. It seems to say we, not they, are the true light ...'

Mackenzie protested that the existence of a supreme being could only ever be inferred. Historical matters could be proved, but anything else would always remain metaphysical.

'This is as applicable to the dim legends of Freemasonry as to anything else, and Mr Bradlaugh in stating his views of the subject is bound by the same rules that should be the guide-line of us all. Although we may reject – as many do – and none can so more emphatically than myself – the literal construction of the Old Testament; although we may impeach the authority by which a number of puerile and obscene legends have been fastened upon society, it is still our clear duty to endeavour to see what remnant of verity remains hidden amidst the fog of traditionary narrative. Should

³⁷⁸ *The Freemason* (12 June 1869), p. 8. For identification of Mackenzie as Cryptonymous, see *The Freemason* (2 May 1874), p. 263.

it be proved that the legends respecting the Tower of Babel – the building of King Solomon's Temple – nay, the very existence of a Jewish polity itself are legend and nothing more, still there lurks in the background some intelligible groundwork on which such legends are founded.'

Mackenzie took issue with Bradlaugh's claim that English Freemasonry was not of high importance:

'True it is that the world could have got along in some fashion without the institution, but still those who are attentive to its silent action cannot deny it a social significance.'

However, Mackenzie found one point on which he could 'cordially coincide' with Bradlaugh, namely in Bradlaugh's declaration that 'Religion has ever been narrow and sectarian; Freemasonry broad and cosmopolitan'. Mackenzie discussed how Freemasonry drew together those of different faiths around a common table, recommending to Bradlaugh a book by a Dr Inman, *Ancient Faiths and Ancient Names*, and concluding with some garbled thoughts on how religious differences are caused by human frailty.

Five years later, the Marquess of Ripon unexpectedly resigned as Grand Master following his conversion to Roman catholicism, and the Prince of Wales was nominated as his successor. Unnoticed by *The Freemason*, Bradlaugh returned his certificate as an English freemason to Great Queen Street.

'A Regrettable Occurrence'

On 31 July 1870, the *National Reformer* carried a report of a special meeting of the *Philadelphes et Concorde Réunis* held to honour the veteran French revolutionary and workers' leader in 1848, Armand Barbès, who had recently died.³⁷⁹ Speeches in memory of Barbès were made by Brothers Jourdain, Rattazzi, Massac and Le Lubez. The speech of Le Lubez was reported at length:

'Among the fundamental principles of Freemasonry, as well as democracy, one, above all, stands prominent, and is admitted by all true masons - that is equality. Though admitted by some freemasons in theory only (for even English freemasons all meet upon the level), that principle is admitted by all...'

War had recently broken out between France and Germany; shortly afterwards came the disaster of Sedan. Members of the French masonic lodges in London had helped establish there a *Société Française d'Angleterre pour les Blessés Français*.³⁸⁰ Bradlaugh hated Napoleon III and welcomed the proclamation of a republic in France in September 1870. He was asked to help rally support for the fledgling republic in Britain, and did so enthusiastically. Bradlaugh was even a candidate for Paris in the elections for a new French government in February 1871.³⁸¹ These elections brought to power Adolphe Thiers, whose republicanism was widely considered half-hearted, while a majority in the National

³⁷⁹ *National Reformer* (31 July 1870), p. 76.

³⁸⁰ Combes, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

³⁸¹ Tribe, *op. cit.*, pp. 123-6.

Assembly were monarchist. On 28 March 1871 the commune was declared.

Bradlaugh had very mixed views on the commune, largely staying silent, 'unable to approve, but refusing to condemn'.³⁸² He attempted to go to France to act as a mediator between Thiers and the commune but was stopped by police at Calais. Above all, Bradlaugh was distressed by the personal tragedies of the commune. Two members of the *Philadelphes et Concorde Réunis* were elected to the commune, while others, such as Edouard Benoît, fought on its behalf.³⁸³ On 9 July 1871, a further announcement appeared in the *National Reformer*:

'A committee has been formed from amongst the members of the *Loge des Philadelphes* for the purpose of assisting the victims of the late events in Paris, some of whom are in the most extreme straits. Any subscriptions may be sent to our friend Le Lubez, 23 Bedford Sq., Commercial Road E, and we can guarantee that they will be properly used. The widow of Dombrowski, who died fighting, is now in London, almost penniless, with two little children, aged 5 and 3, and in a few days will be again a mother.'³⁸⁴

Ellic Howe suggested that the establishment of the Third Republic resulted in the return home of the refugees from France and the collapse of the *Philadelphes*. In fact, many French Republicans in London were unable or

unwilling to return home while Thiers was still in power and the future of the Republic was uncertain, while the proscription of the *communards* meant that a new wave of French political refugees appeared in London. The old *Philadelphes* lodge which had continued in existence after 1868 as a protest against Benoit's proceedings, fizzled out in 1871,³⁸⁵ but the *Philadelphes et Concorde Réunis* continued to be very active throughout the 1870s. Moreover, in 1872 some veterans of the commune established an avowedly revolutionary Lodge, *La Fédération*, which met first at the Canonbury Tavern in Islington and afterwards in respectable Holloway.³⁸⁶ According to a French police report of 1873, two Polish Republican Lodges were also established in London, *La Persévérance Patriotique* and *La Révolution Universelle*.³⁸⁷ Relations between these groups and the *Philadelphes* were cordial, but there were no formal links between them. The police report concluded that the activities of these lodges, including the *Philadelphes*,

³⁸⁵ Combes, 'Des Origines du Rite de Memphis', p. 58.

³⁸⁶ Combes, 'Les Philadelphes et les autres loges de Communards réfugiés', pp. 40-2. The venue is given as the Canterbury Tavern, but the description of the location (north of Islington) makes it clear that the Canonbury Tavern is meant.

³⁸⁷ Combes, *op. cit.*, pp. 47-8. The 1857 statutes of the *Philadelphes* in The Library and Museum of Freemasonry were printed by Bro. Zeno Swiętosławski of Holborn, suggesting that these Polish Lodges were in existence before 1870.

³⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 123.

³⁸³ Combes, 'Les Philadelphes et les autres loges de Communards réfugiés', p. 37.

³⁸⁴ *National Reformer*, (9 July 1871), p. 17.

were essentially philanthropic, and posed no serious political threat to the government in France.³⁸⁸

The Third Republic was established almost by accident, and, as Roger Magraw has commented, until 1876 it existed almost by default.³⁸⁹ The majority of the National Assembly was in favour of a return of the monarchy but, divided between legitimists, Orleanists and Bonapartists, was unable to achieve this end. The process whereby a republican consensus was achieved by the 1880s was a complex one in which provincial capitalists and professional classes formed an alliance with peasants and small producers.³⁹⁰ It involved the propagation of secular, lay values, accompanied by attacks on the catholic right, which increasingly retreated into a religious obscurantism reinforced by anti-semitic and anti-masonic fantasies. A key plank of the republican platform was the secularisation of education.³⁹¹ The way in which French Freemasonry played a vital role in helping to secure support for the new republic can be seen in its promotion of non-religious educational activity.³⁹² The struggles within French Freemasonry between 1871 and 1877 reflected this wider campaign to secure republican values. A focal point was the position accorded to the Supreme Being, and the triumph of the

³⁸⁸ Combes, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

³⁸⁹ Roger Magraw, *France 1815-1914: The Bourgeois Century* (Oxford, 1983), p. 209.

³⁹⁰ Magraw, *op. cit.*, pp. 209-24.

³⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 216-8.

³⁹² Chevalier, *op. cit.*, 3, pp. 56-71.

Republican Party was expressed in the final adoption in 1877 of a revised first article removing references to the Great Architect of the Universe and belief in a future state. Appropriately, this took place at exactly the time that the Republican Party finally established a firm grip on power, following the crisis provoked by President McMahon's attempt to dismiss a republican government.³⁹³

It was the revision of the first article of the Grand Orient's Constitutions which, of course, prompted the breach with the Grand Lodges of England and other English-speaking countries. Developments in French Freemasonry had been watched with anxiety by English freemasons for many years before 1877. The most striking feature of the increasing tension between English and French Freemasonry was the extent to which it appears to have been exacerbated – if not generated – by the masonic press on both sides of the Channel. As has been seen, *The Freemason* saw Freemasonry and the church (and particularly the Anglican Church) as complementary. It was convinced that French Freemasonry had been hijacked by a small group of freethinkers and atheists, singling out the positivist Alexandre Massol as a particularly malign influence.³⁹⁴ *The Freemason's Chronicle* took a line that was more sympathetic to developments in France, enthusiastically reporting the secular education initiatives undertaken

³⁹³ Magraw, *op. cit.*, pp. 211-3.

³⁹⁴ *The Freemason* (19 January 1884), p. 25.

there.³⁹⁵ The difference between the editorial line of the two journals is reflected in their view of the initiation of the famous French positivist, Emile Littré by the Parisian Lodge *La Clémentine Amitié* in July 1875. *The Freemason* saw this as marking the apotheosis of the degradation of French Freemasonry by atheism, freethought, and socialism;³⁹⁶ for *The Freemason's Chronicle* the initiation of such a well-known member of the French Academy reflected the flourishing state of French Freemasonry.³⁹⁷ However, although *The Freemason's Chronicle* carefully avoided contributing to the war of words so enthusiastically pursued by *The Freemason*, when the crisis came, *The Freemason's Chronicle* was unable to accept the changes made by the Grand Orient, and sought, in some measured editorials, to explain why atheism was unacceptable to English Freemasonry and to persuade the Grand Orient that Freemasonry should not be split.³⁹⁸ It was, however, too little, too late.

In France, the chief sparring partner of *The Freemason* was *Le Monde Maçonnique*, edited by the French positivist and republican, Jean Marie Lazare Caubet.³⁹⁹ The dialogue between *The Freemason* and *Le Monde Maçonnique* vividly illustrates the cultural disjunction between English and French Freemasonry in

the years leading up to 1877. For *The Freemason*, morality sprang from religion, and freedom of conscience was synonymous with atheism and infidelity. For *Le Monde Maçonnique*, English Freemasonry was in hock to the aristocracy and the clergy, and had betrayed the secular mission of Freemasonry. These were, of course, the criticisms that had previously been raised by the *Philadelphes*, and during the period 1871-1877 *Le Monde Maçonnique* regularly carried news about the French refugee lodges in London and published articles written by members of these lodges. By encouraging and promoting these suspicions of English Freemasonry in France, the *Philadelphes* contributed substantially to the rift between the two Grand Lodges.

A characteristic exchange between *The Freemason* and *Le Monde Maçonnique* took place between October 1874 and February 1875.⁴⁰⁰ *The Freemason* had carried an article on 'The True Mission of Freemasonry', which it described as a 'simple and straightforward enunciation of the universality of Freemasonry, and yet of the happy possession in all our lodges of God's holy and inspired word'. It portrayed continental Freemasonry as chimerical and English Freemasonry as more solid, grounded in recognition of the Supreme Being, with the bible as its touchstone. *Le Monde Maçonnique* described the article in *The Freemason* as complacent and self-

³⁹⁵ *The Freemason's Chronicle* (23 December 1876), p. 419.

³⁹⁶ *The Freemason* (19 January 1884), p. 25.

³⁹⁷ *The Freemason's Chronicle* (25 December 1875), p. 410.

³⁹⁸ See, for example, *The Freemason's Chronicle* (10 November 1877), pp. 305-6.

³⁹⁹ Chevalier, *op. cit.*, 2, p. 449.

⁴⁰⁰ *The Freemason* (31 October 1874), pp. 676-7; (13 February 1875), pp. 66-7; *Le Monde Maçonnique* 16 (1874-5), pp. 155-7, 204-6, 219-225.

satisfied, and asked what exactly was the more practical aim of English Freemasonry with which continental Freemasonry contrasted so unfavourably. The French journal declared that, for all its faults, it preferred the continental system of Freemasonry to English utilitarianism. Caubet also printed a lengthy critique of *The Freemason* by Henri Valleton, who was described as London correspondent of *Le Monde Maçonique*. Valleton had been the Master of a Lodge in Bordeaux,⁴⁰¹ a popular speaker in the Republican clubs of Paris in 1848, and was now *Orateur* of the *Philadelphes*. Valleton denounced the piece in *The Freemason* as full of contradictions, illogicalities, sophistry, enormities and nonsense: '*les Maçons Anglais ne sont ni illuminés, ni mystiques, ni philosophes, ni logiques*'. Valleton declared that English Freemasonry was under the direction of the Anglican clergy, and described *The Freemason* as the organ of sacerdotal Freemasonry in England. For Valleton, English Freemasonry was anti-liberal and reactionary.

The Freemason in turn was outraged. It expressed puzzlement as to who Valleton was, assuming he must be very junior in the Craft. *The Freemason* loudly proclaimed that English Freemasonry would never give up its bibles and, in an interesting twist of Valleton's words, said that English Freemasonry was proud to be anti-infidel and tolerant. 'Infidel' was of course the label

proudly adopted by atheists such as Bradlaugh. Valleton had claimed that:

'There is in England as in France, a Freemasonry free, philosophical, scientific, positive, which proclaims, as we do, that all men are brethren, beyond all religion and nationalities.'

This statement puzzled *The Freemason*, but he was, of course, referring to the *Philadelphes*. *The Freemason* signed off by declaring proudly that:

'Though we accept in our Order all men except the atheist and the libertine, and look with compassion and sympathy on all mankind, we have no leaning for the expansive notion of continental positivism or any other ism. We have nothing to do with these new philosophies which are undermining social order elsewhere, neither can we manifest any, even the slightest approval, of those subversive dogmas which end in either a positive infidelity or the offensive assertion of a *morale sans Dieu*.'

For *Le Monde Maçonique*, the urgent need was to keep the clergy at bay; for *The Freemason*, the threat came from the atheist. Each journal provided plenty of ammunition to confirm the other's prejudices. *The Freemason* urged English masons to be at the forefront of the movement for the reconstruction and repair of historic churches; *Le Monde Maçonique* reported on progress in opening up Freemasonry to blacks in the United States.⁴⁰² Increasingly, *The Freemason* pinned its hopes for French Freemasonry on *La Chaîne d'Union*

⁴⁰¹ Chevalier, *op. cit.*, 2, p. 536.

⁴⁰² *Le Monde Maçonique* 15 (1873-4), pp. 186-7; 16 (1874-5), pp. 119-125.

(ironically the journal founded by the *Philadelphes*), which, under the direction of the more conservative Hubert, who was himself apparently a catholic,⁴⁰³ tried to pour oil on troubled waters. However, Hubert's concern was to ensure that French Freemasonry remained as broadly based as possible and he was by no means inclined to undertake the kind of evangelical campaign which *The Freemason* clearly thought was necessary. When the changes came, he followed the official line.

In November 1873, *Le Monde Maçonique* reported that a group of French masons in London had provisionally formed a lodge under the title *L'Union Maçonique*.⁴⁰⁴ It had petitioned for a warrant from the Grand Lodge of England, but the petition had been refused. Caubet assumed this was because the Grand Lodge objected to an English lodge working in French. The lodge was nevertheless still meeting, and a subsequent report of its elections shows that most of its members belonged to the *Philadelphes*. In fact, the petition for *L'Union Maçonique* had been turned down not because it wanted to work in French, but because the Grand Secretary, John Hervey, had referred it to the police, who had submitted the following report:

'With reference to attached application from French masonic Lodge, I beg to report that careful enquiries have been made by Chief Inspector Drurcovich and P. C. Marchand, and find that "La Loge Les Philadelphes

⁴⁰³ Chevalier, *op. cit.*, 2, p. 545.

⁴⁰⁴ *Le Monde Maçonique* 15 (1873-4), pp. 334, 430, 514; Combes, *op. cit.*, pp. 48-9.

et Concorde Réunis", was held at 71 Dean Street, Soho, in 1870, and at that time, "Marc Ratazzi", "Massac", "Delpeche", "Poirsou", and "Jourdain", were the principal office bearers of the Lodge. These men I am informed are all of extreme Republican opinions.

I have also ascertained that at that time the Lodge was visited on more than one occasion by Messrs Bradlaugh, Odger,⁴⁰⁵ and Gustave Flourens, who were on intimate terms with most of its members, and as further proof of their Republican principle, I may mention that when Barbes (a noted Communist) died about two years ago, the members of this Lodge buried him in effigy.

The result of this enquiry leads me to believe that this Lodge was instituted for political motives under the disguise of Masonry.

F W Williamson

⁴⁰⁶
Supt.

In 1874, members of *L'Union Maçonique* were reported as joining *Les Philadelphes et la Concorde Réunis* at the funeral of Prosper Simard, a former Master of the *Philadelphes*, the first editor of *La Chaîne d'Union*, and another veteran of the workers' rising of 1848. Valleton gave a moving funeral oration which was reported in full in *Le Monde Maçonique*.⁴⁰⁷

Le Monde Maçonique continued to carry regular news of *Les Philadelphes et Concorde Réunis*, prompting *The Freemason* to point out that this was 'a surreptitious meeting of a secret society, not in any sense of the word

⁴⁰⁵ George Odger, English radical shoemaker, trade unionist and socialist.

⁴⁰⁶ Subject file 'Grand Orient of France'

⁴⁰⁷ *Le Monde Maçonique* 16 (1874-5), pp. 175-83. *L'Union Maçonique* was still active in 1875; it was this Lodge which had sent by means of Bradlaugh a letter of congratulation to the Adelphi Lodge on the election of Smith as Junior Warden.

masonic'.⁴⁰⁸ At the time when the revision of the first article was under active discussion in the Grand Orient, *Le Monde Maçonnique* ran a long series of articles on religion and philosophy by Valleton, which took a broadly positivist perspective.⁴⁰⁹ *Le Monde Maçonnique* also watched carefully for evidence of pro-clerical tendencies in English Freemasonry. It noted with particular interest an incident in the English Grand Lodge in 1876, when a proposal that the Grand Lodge should make a large donation for the restoration of the Cathedrals of St Paul and St Albans was defeated because this was considered an inappropriate use for masonic funds, and it was agreed to use the money instead for the purchase of lifeboats.⁴¹⁰ Among the

⁴⁰⁸ For example, *Le Monde Maçonnique* 17 (1875-6), pp. 472; 18 (1876-7), p. 101.

⁴⁰⁹ *Le Monde Maçonnique* 16 (1874-5), pp. 279-283, 318-322, 358-366; 17 (1875-6), pp. 84-94, 179-188, 269-81, 377-79, 438-445, 528-53; 18 (1876-7), pp. 41-5.

⁴¹⁰ *The Freemason* (10 June 1876), pp. 258-9; (17 June 1876), p. 278; (1 July 1876), pp. 304-5; (8 July 1876), pp. 317-8; (22 July 1876), p. 329; (9 September 1876), p. 403; (6 January 1877), pp. 1-3; (13 January 1877), p. 16; *Le Monde Maçonnique* 18 (1876-7), pp. 157-9; *The Freemason's Chronicle* (3 June 1876), pp. 353-4, 369-70. *Le Monde Maçonnique* welcomed the outcome of this controversy as evidence that English Freemasonry (which it felt had used the legends of Freemasonry as a means of justifying support for the church) had not entirely forgotten the true traditions of Freemasonry. The institution of masonic lifeboats was a cause which had been specially promoted by *The Freemason's Chronicle* since its inception. However, in this controversy it preferred that the money should instead be given to masonic charities.

opponents of this proposal in Grand Lodge was the radical Unitarian John Baxter Langley, who had been a close associate of Bradlaugh on the Reform League⁴¹¹ and had been a member of his defence committee at the time of the 'Fruits of Philosophy' trial.⁴¹² Langley caused uproar by suggesting, in a letter to *The Freemason*, that carvings on the cathedrals were the remnants of ancient phallus worship.⁴¹³

The Freemason's Chronicle had carefully avoided commenting on the French situation. In September 1876 the annual assembly of the Grand Orient decided that the first article of its constitutions should be revised, and that lodges should submit proposals for a new wording which allowed greater liberty of conscience. *The Freemason's Chronicle* finally felt constrained to comment, and declared that the proposed changes would be:

'...in direct antagonism to the fundamental principles of the Craft. Freemasonry as we understand it in England does impose one limit on freedom of conscience. It requires all its disciples to recognise the existence of a supreme being and a future state. They may adopt any

⁴¹¹ Charles Bradlaugh, *The Autobiography of Mr Bradlaugh: A Page of His Life* (1873), p. 18.

⁴¹² *The National Reformer* (29 April 1877), p. 269.

⁴¹³ *The Freemason* (1 July 1876), pp. 304-5; (8 July 1876), pp. 317-8; (22 July 1876), p. 329. A letter in support of Langley was published by *The Freemason's Chronicle* (15 July 1876), p. 37. On Langley, see further *The Era of the Reform League: English Labour and Radical Politics*, ed. J. Breuilly, G. Niedhart and A. Taylor (Mannheim, 1995), p. 333.

form of religious worship they please, but they must believe in God.⁴¹⁴

Thus far, the dispute between English and French Freemasonry had been conducted entirely through the masonic press. The Grand Officers now felt a need to intervene. On 11 November 1876, a new lodge was consecrated by John Hervey as Grand Secretary and he made a speech on the developments in French Freemasonry. He seems to have chosen the occasion for this speech very carefully. The lodge being consecrated was Crichton Lodge No. 1641, a lodge founded by teachers and officers of the London School Board⁴¹⁵ – education had been both in England and France a battleground for the establishment of secular values.⁴¹⁶ The ceremony was held in the new Surrey Masonic Hall in Camberwell, intended to provide a venue for masonic activities in the new urban area of South London. *The Freemason* had strongly supported the building of the

⁴¹⁴ *The Freemason's Chronicle* (21 October 1876), p. 259.

⁴¹⁵ The petition for the Crichton Lodge states that the founders: 'are associated either professionally or sympathetically with the work of Education, and that they had been led to meet at Camberwell for consultations and as members of committees and otherwise. Finding so many masons among themselves and worthy men desirous of becoming masons, united with them in common educational efforts, they have determined to ask for a warrant to meet at the Surrey Masonic Hall.'

⁴¹⁶ See, for example, John Lawson and Harold Silver, *A Social History of Education in England* (1973), pp. 292-296, 314-324, 350-5; Magraw, *op. cit.*, pp. 216-8.

Surrey Masonic Hall and had published a print of the building, which *Le Monde Maçonnique* thought inappropriate in style.⁴¹⁷

In his speech to the Crichton Lodge, Hervey began by reviewing the condition of English Freemasonry. It was the second time in a few weeks that he had visited the Surrey Masonic Hall to consecrate a new lodge. In recent years, the number of English lodges had increased by an average of about fifty a year.

'That was a great increase in the number of new Lodges, and he trusted on behalf of the Craft he loved so well, that so long as those lodges were properly conducted, and they acted together as masons, that they would be glad to see them increase in number. (Hear, hear.) He wished he could say as much as regarded lodges in foreign countries, for he was sorry to say that their late increase in numbers did not bring with it a corresponding increase in respectability. It was well known that for some time past in France the sacred volume had been banished from their lodges, while in some other French lodges they would admit men whether they believed in the existence of a supreme being or not. Therefore, speaking entirely as an individual he thought it would be for the Grand Lodge to consider whether they would receive the members of foreign lodges with that state of things before them. He spoke merely as a member of Grand Lodge, but he thought the time would come when they would seriously have to consider whether they would admit foreigners into their lodges as visitors, when they would not admit members of their own lodges under similar terms. This was a subject which must occupy the attention of the Craft, and which we trust would necessarily demand

⁴¹⁷ See, for example, *The Freemason* (6 July 1872), p. 468; (15 March 1873), p. 192; (24 May 1873), p. 346; (19 July 1873), p. 463; (29 May 1874), pp. 341-2; (17 July 1875), pp. 310-11. A lithograph of the hall was printed in *The Freemason* (20 February 1875), facing p. 80. *Le Monde Maçonnique* 16 (1874-5), p. 502, criticized the octagonal tower, with 'its elongated dome in the shape of an egg', as a pointless and extravagant addition.

their serious consideration. Having taken the first step to banish the bible from their lodges, it was only an easy step they were taking to admit those who had no belief whatever in the existence of a supreme being. Whatever these foreign lodges might do, whatever might be the men whom they chose to admit, he hoped that no such step would be taken in this country, for if it was so, it would strike at the very root and existence of Freemasonry, and the sooner the Craft fell to the ground the better.’

The Rev. Robert Simpson, Past Grand Chaplain, echoed Hervey’s comments:

‘...he grieved to read the terrible changes contemplated with regard to their brethren in France. That country had gone through many troubles, but when it entered upon the perilous course of ignoring the existence of God, the great founder of the universe, he ventured to say that she had many and much greater troubles in store for her, and when the subject came to be considered in the Crichton Lodge, he believed that its voice would be heard with no uncertain sound, but would be to the honour of the Great Master Builder, as the author of their being, and the God whom they adored.’⁴¹⁸

Le Monde Maçonnique responded to Hervey's speech in terms which had been pioneered by the *Philadelphes* many years beforehand. It began by stressing the religious components of the ceremony which had taken place in Camberwell, how a prayer had been read, hymns sung and passages from the bible read by the chaplain. It then reported Hervey’s speech and made the following declaration to its readers:

⁴¹⁸ *The Freemason* (25 November 1876), p. 522.

‘Thus we are warned. If the French masons do not get rid of the unbelievers who are among them, if they do not make a sufficient provision of bibles (there exists in England a society which can furnish them at the cheapest price), they must expect to be excommunicated by English Masonry, and the United Grand Lodge of England will have nothing for them but contempt, perhaps worse, so long as Brother Hervey is the all-powerful Grand Secretary.

This comment by *Le Monde Maçonnique* sparked off a furious series of exchanges with *The Freemason*.⁴¹⁹ Not surprisingly, in the course of this controversy between the two masonic journals, the question of the *Philadelphes* came up again.⁴²⁰ Valleton wrote for *Le Monde Maçonnique* an article supporting the revision of the first article and reviewing some possible models of wording, including the statutes of the *Philadelphes* themselves.⁴²¹ This prompted *The Freemason* to unleash some extremely personal invective against Valleton.⁴²² Exasperated with *Le Monde Maçonnique*, *The*

⁴¹⁹ *The Freemason* (6 January 1877), p. 7; (10 February 1877), p. 56; (17 February 1877), pp. 67, 74; (24 March 1877), p. 117; (31 March 1877), pp. 126-7; (5 May 1877), p. 176; (2 June 1877), p. 221. Eventually, after the final breach, *The Freemason*, declaring that in France a body such as the *Philadelphes* would be shut up in twenty four hours, refused further controversy with *Le Monde Maçonnique*: (23 February 1878), p. 105.

⁴²⁰ *The Freemason* (7 February 1877), pp. 56-7.

⁴²¹ *Le Monde Maçonnique* 19 (1877-8), pp. 15-22.

⁴²² ‘This ingenuous [*sic*] and ingenious youth’; ‘masonic socialism, revolution with a vengeance, and anything more childish, ridiculous, or pitiable we have never seen, and we can only suppose that the writer is seriously suffering from “communism on the brain”’, *The Freemason* (2 June 1877), p. 221.

Freemason increasingly carried reports from *La Chaîne d'Union*, in the hope of suggesting that opposition to the change in France was greater than it in fact was.⁴²³ One interesting letter to Hubert on which *The Freemason* seized was from Léon Clerc in London, expressing concern that changes in France might create a rift with English Freemasonry.⁴²⁴ Clerc, *The Freemason* failed to point out, was a member of the *Philadelphes*.

The Grand Orient of Egypt was the first to issue a formal protest against the proposed changes, in the hope of preventing their implementation.⁴²⁵ On 22 September 1877, The Freemason carried the following report:

'The recent "Convent" of the Grand Orient of France, which opened on the 10th and closed on the 15th instant, has ended, in our opinion, in giving one of the greatest blows to French Freemasonry which it has ever received. The lodges, by 135 to 76, and the Grand Orient, by a large majority, have determined to suppress the mention of the name of God. Whereas formerly belief in God and the immortality of the soul were publicly recognised as the great basis of French Freemasonry, now, the second section of Article I is to be reformed to this effect: *Elle a pour principe la liberté absolue de conscience, et la solidarité humaine*, whatever that may mean... The principles of Massol are at last sanctioned by the Grand Orient of France, and the consequences of the act are most serious, and widely extending.'⁴²⁶

⁴²³ For example, *The Freemason* (7 April 1877), pp. 136-7; (12 May 1877), pp. 190-1; (9 February 1878), p. 78; (13 April 1878), p. 196.

⁴²⁴ *La Chaîne d'Union* 13 (1877), pp. 305-6; *The Freemason* (23 June 1877), pp. 255-7.

⁴²⁵ *The Freemason* (16 December 1876), pp. 564-5.

⁴²⁶ *Op. cit.* (22 September 1877), p. 392.

The *Loge des Philadelphes et Concorde Réunis* passed a resolution congratulating the French Lodges on the adoption of the new Constitution, which was printed in *Le Monde Maçonique*:

'In putting an end to this glaring contradiction between the spirit of Freemasonry which prescribes for us study, free examination and absolute liberty of opinions, and a tyrannical system imposing an article of faith on the very ones whom it calls to study, a system which excludes from Freemasonry any man who does not admit limits to the exercise of his right to scientific enquiry, in bringing an end to this contradiction, your delegates have brought about an act of justice.'⁴²⁷

At the beginning of November 1877, the Grand Lodge of Ireland, which itself had suffered recently from Ultramontane attacks and was anxious to head off further trouble, resolved that it no longer recognized the Grand Orient as a masonic body, and instructed its lodges to refuse to admit visitors from the Grand Orient of France.⁴²⁸ In Scotland, Mother Kilwinning, seeing itself as the font of all Freemasonry, was keen to enter the fray and communicate direct with France. However, it was eventually agreed that the matter should be considered by the Scottish Grand Lodge. The Grand Committee corresponded with the Grand Orient, but was not satisfied by the response, and at the end of November the Grand Committee recommended that fraternal relations

⁴²⁷ *Le Monde Maçonique* 19 (1877-8), pp. 407-9.

⁴²⁸ *The Freemason* (10 November 1877), p. 479.

with the Grand Orient should cease, a decision ratified by the Grand Lodge the following February.⁴²⁹

The constant refrain of English-speaking critics of the Grand Orient's decision was that it was promoting atheism: 'nothing but moral nihilism and avowed atheism', 'infidelity and communism', 'the propaganda of atheism, materialism and communism, triplet devils of the mind'.⁴³⁰ Inevitably, critics of the French decision quickly made connections with Bradlaugh. A correspondent writing to *The Freemason* described the Grand Orient as 'a licensed infidel community – of Bradlaughism'.⁴³¹ The *Philadelphes* had been effective in conveying their criticisms of English Freemasonry in France, but had little impact in England. In order to defend itself in England, French Freemasonry looked to its most prominent English representative, Charles Bradlaugh. It may have been hoped that Bradlaugh would be as successful in defending republican values in Freemasonry as he had been in supporting the Third Republic at its birth, but in fact the involvement of Bradlaugh simply confirmed English suspicions that the changes in France were a Freethought *coup*.

The subject of relations with the Grand Orient was scheduled for consideration at the December Quarterly

⁴²⁹ *Op. cit.* (9 February 1878), p. 75.

⁴³⁰ *Op. cit.* (10 November 1877), p. 482; (17 November 1877), p. 492.

⁴³¹ *Op. cit.* (1 December 1877), p. 522.

Communication of the English Grand Lodge.⁴³² The leading article in the *National Reformer* on 9 December 1877 was a lengthy address to the Prince of Wales as Grand Master on behalf of French Freemasons, protesting against the sanctions of the Grand Lodge of Ireland against the Grand Orient, and urging the English Grand Lodge not to follow a similar course:

'What have the French Freemasons done that you should exclude them from your lodges, and that you break off all communication with them? Have they shut out any man on account of his religious creed? Not one; all that they have done is to erase from their constitution words which were a barrier against, and a penalty on, honest heretics. Do you say that belief in a deity is essential for masons? Which deity? The Christian trinitarian deity? Then be consistent, and with the Prussian lodges drive out the Jew... If it be the Christian God alone, what becomes of your brethren, Mahomedan, Buddhist, or Brahman? Are you going to break with their lodges also? If you reply that it is not the God of any particular sect, but some unknown deity for whom you repeat the famous declaration of the Egyptian temple, "whose veil no mortal ever yet has raised", then I warn you that your act will carry religious controversy amongst the whole of your lodges...

The French order has introduced no religious dispute, it has proclaimed "absolute freedom" for the human mind. It has declared for "the brotherhood of mankind". You English freemasons if you curse the Frenchmen for their progress, will hardly bless yourselves. At present no strife has been sought in your temples, but if you curse we must try to rob your anathema of its force, by instructing English freemasons as to why the change is made. And in this struggle we must win. "Freedom of conscience" dare you denounce it? "Brotherhood of mankind" dare you oppose it? Leave theology to the priests, and creeds to the churches; the mission of Freemasonry is the redemption and elevation of humanity, or it has no right to exist. Religious texts belong to yesterday; humanity lives into tomorrow; its

⁴³² *Ibid.*, pp. 513, 520.

yesterday's relics are corrupt and mouldering. We are for the future. To which will you belong?'

The *National Reformer* continued to keep a close eye on the issue. In January 1878, Bradlaugh had some fun with a clergyman who had preached against the action of Grand Orient:

'The Rev. John Thomson of St Mary's Church Hawick is a member of the St John's Lodge of Freemasons. This masonic parson lately preached a sermon against his French brethren... He said that:

"Those who write atheist after their name, as Shelley once did, or reject their belief in God, as the members of the Grand Orient of France have done, must be unable to consider evidence as they ought to do – in other words, they must be fools, poor weak dottery drivelling idiots, upon whose minds the clearest evidence can make no impression."

The courtesy of expression in the above passage leaves nothing to be desired; we preserve the paragraph as an illustration of nineteenth-century pulpit oratory and Christian charity in Hawick. The Rev. Brother John Thomson of St John's Lodge, Hawick, is not only a preacher, he is also a profound logician, and he argues about theism in a way to carry conviction home to every "dottery drivelling idiot" his words may reach. He says that God:

"...was watching over the things created, still over-ruling all his creatures and all their actions in a way that was holy, just and good. Under this beneficent government we see good brought out of evil; peace out of war; health out of sickness; light out of darkness. Under the Great Creator's direction little things accomplish great events; great events come to nothing; and wars, famines, and vast complications taking place in different parts of the world at the same time, are in a most extraordinary way dove-tailed into each other."

Pleasant this – a family starves on the Duke of Norfolk's Hallamshire estates, and this starvation "dovetails" in with the plenty at the ducal mansion. There is a famine in India, with thousands dying, but *per contra*, there is a masonic banquet in Hawick, and the "little thing" is dovetailed by "the Great Creator" with the great event. There is war

and misery in Bulgaria, and comfort and peace in St John's Lodge. Earthquake in Peru, and golfing in north Britain. Can anything be better managed? A smallpox epidemic, a plague, a succession of fevers, all beautifully arranged for the special benefit of those who do not suffer from them; and yet there are "fools, poor weak dottery drivelling idiots" who will not be convinced!⁴³³

At the December 1877 Quarterly Communication, a committee was appointed to consider the changes made by the Grand Orient of France.⁴³⁴ At the next Quarterly Communication on 6 March 1878, the report of the committee was considered and it was agreed unanimously that all lodges under the English Grand Lodge:

'...be directed not to admit any foreign brother as a visitor unless first he is duly vouched for, or unless he has been initiated according to the ancient rites and ceremonies in a Lodge professing belief in the Great Architect of the Universe, and secondly that he shall not be admitted unless he himself shall acknowledge that this belief is an essential landmark of the Order.'⁴³⁵

The passing of these resolutions led to a brief but belated flurry of support for the Grand Orient from a few English freemasons writing to *The Freemason*. One suggested that the changes in France were no different from those introduced by the English Grand Lodge in 1813 when the

⁴³³ *National Reformer* (20 January 1878), p. 922.

⁴³⁴ *The Freemason* (8 December 1877), pp. 527-9, 534.

⁴³⁵ *Op. cit.* (9 March 1878), p. 125. Copies of the Committee's report and the resolutions are on the subject file 'Grand Orient of France'.

right of non-Christians to join Freemasonry was affirmed. Another took issue with the way in which Lord Carnarvon had chaired the meeting of Grand Lodge, and expressing support for the French position. Referring to the 'elimination' of references to a future state, he pointed out that:

'...it is well known that a large proportion of our Jewish brethren do not believe in the immortality of the soul, but I was never in a lodge where an Israelite was refused permission to enter it upon this account.'⁴³⁶

Nevertheless the great battle promised by Bradlaugh never happened. Possibly the Grand Orient may have realized that Bradlaugh's involvement was counter-productive and simply polarized opinion. Or perhaps the fight actually did take place, but on wholly different territory. The actions of the French Grand Orient had stirred up anxiety about the perceived threat of atheism among many English freemasons, who comprised a substantial section of the English upper and middle classes. As such the dispute between French and English Freemasonry paved the way for the tumultuous national debate sparked off two years later by Bradlaugh's election to parliament.

⁴³⁶ *The Freemason* (23 March 1878), p. 162.

What Freemasonry Is, What It Has Been, and What It Ought To Be

In July 1884, the English Grand Lodge received a petition for the formation of a new lodge. An accompanying letter from Eugène Monteunis, a French businessman in London who was a former Grand Officer of the Province of Middlesex, outlined the reasons for the proposed new lodge:

'We are all members of the Société Nationale Française, a society founded some four years ago the object of which was of uniting the elements of which the French colony in England was composed and fostering among its members a social and friendly intercourse by giving them the opportunity of becoming better acquainted with one another.

It has occurred to the petitioners who are masons under the Grand Lodge of England that if we were allowed to unite in one lodge, we would much assist in carrying out the above great principles which accord so well with those of the Craft.

We would further urge upon you that many of our countrymen find themselves deprived of the benefits of Freemasonry, being reluctant to join the Grand Orient under its present constitution but would gladly avail themselves of those great privileges if allowed to obtain them under the Grand Lodge of England...

We hope further that at no distant period we, with the permission of the MW the Grand Master, may be able to work the English Ritual in the French language...'

A supporting letter from Frank Richardson, as Master of St Luke's Lodge No. 144, pointed out that:

'[The Lodge] is started by the French colony in London, many of whom are Masons, and are anxious to have some lodge, wherein to meet, but are not able to use their own lodges as you are aware. The real founder of the lodge is Bro. Monteunis, PM of the Tuscan,

although you will see he does not become First Master... It appears to me a capital thing, and one which would conduce to a good feeling between the masons of both countries, and might ultimately bring about a good state of affairs in France...'

The petition was approved, and La France Lodge No. 2060 was consecrated in October 1884, having received permission to work in the French language. In reporting the consecration, *The Freemason* made the following comments:

'Considering the change which has latterly come over the spirit of French Freemasonry, as now and for some years past interpreted by the Grand Orient of France, it is certainly desirable that enlightened Frenchmen should have afforded to them the opportunity of learning what Freemasonry is at is understood and practised in the original home of the Craft. It cannot be otherwise than an advantage to the fraternity generally, and must help to dissipate those silly charges of atheism and immorality which are being constantly levelled against it, when foreign masons learn, as doubtless they will through the medium of 'La France' Lodge, that there is nothing incongruous between the practice of our ancient system of Masonry and the moral and religious observances of law-abiding men.'⁴³⁷

The Freemason also reported at length an oration at the consecration of the lodge by the Revd Ambrose Hall, a Past Grand Chaplain:

'Although at present our guests in Britain, you, doubtless, from time to time visit your own country, and however occupied here you all, like good sons, look forward to end your days in your mother land, and when you go back, and as you go back, you will I am sure carry with you confirmed opinions of what the Great Architect does for us,

⁴³⁷ *Op. cit.* (25 October 1884), p. 493.

and how, under his almighty care, we are permitted to diffuse and carry out some of the purest principles of piety and virtue ever entrusted to the care of finite beings; and who knows but that you, masonic brethren of Lodge La France, may have before you a glorious future in pouring balm upon the now troubled waters of Masonry; that you may be the "little leaven", the "grain of mustard seed", to call back our wandering and mistaken brethren to their Father's and rest.'⁴³⁸

One of the first members to join the Lodge was Léon Clerc, who of course had been initiated in the *Philadelphes* and had been an editor of *La Chaîne d'Union* while it was published in London. He joined La France Lodge by virtue of a certificate of the Grand Orient de France issued in 1863 at the request of *La Persévérante Amitié* of Paris – exactly the same basis on which Bradlaugh had joined the High Cross Lodge all those years previously. Clerc was Master of La France Lodge from 1889-90 and became Secretary of the Lodge in 1897. Clerc wrote a letter describing the consecration of La France Lodge which was published in *La Chaîne d'Union*, where Hubert noted that Clerc had been one of the original founders of the journal.⁴³⁹

The Grand Orient had earlier in the year made an appeal to those masonic jurisdictions which did not recognize it, pointing out that there was a common bond of fraternity and urging reconciliation.⁴⁴⁰ The Grand

⁴³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 494.

⁴³⁹ *La Chaîne d'Union* 20 (1884), pp. 438-9.

⁴⁴⁰ *The Freemason* (12 January 1884), pp. 11-12; (19 January 1884), p. 25; (26 January 1884), p. 39.

Orient was alarmed by the establishment of La France Lodge, which seemed to presage an attempt by the English Grand Lodge to try and sow the seeds of English Freemasonry on French soil. On 28 November 1884, the Grand Orient wrote formally to the Prince of Wales as English Grand Master, stating once again its case. A copy of the Grand Orient's letter in the archives of the English Grand Lodge has some interesting annotations, by the Grand Secretary, Colonel Shadwell Clerke.⁴⁴¹ In response to the Grand Orient's protest that its changes to the first article had been misinterpreted by the English Grand Lodge as 'a profession of atheism and materialism', Clerke commented 'We have never said so'. The letter from the Grand Orient went on to quote from the official circular which had been sent to French Lodges in 1877:

'Nothing has been changed in either the principles or practice of Freemasonry. French Freemasonry remains what it has always been: a tolerant and fraternal organisation. Respecting the religious and political beliefs of its members, it allows each one, in these difficult matters, freedom of conscience. Working towards the moral and intellectual perfection and well-being of mankind, French Freemasonry demands that those who wish to join it are honest and lovers of the good...'

Clerke added a further comment: 'That is does *not* require a belief in God!'

The English Grand Lodge's response to this letter was finally issued in Clerke's name on 12 January 1885:

⁴⁴¹ Subject file 'Grand Orient of France'.

'The Grand Lodge of England never imagined that the Grand Orient wished to make a formal profession of atheism and materialism; but the Grand Lodge of England maintains and has always maintained that belief in God is the first great mark of all true and genuine Masonry, and that any association which lacks this professed belief as an essential principle of its existence has no right to claim the heritage of the traditions and practices of ancient and pure Masonry. The abandonment of this landmark, in the opinion of the Grand Lodge of England, removes the foundation stone of any masonic edifice; and that is why this Grand Lodge has marked with sincere regret that the Grand Orient of France has effaced from its Constitutions, by the modification admitted in 1877, the affirmation of the existence of God, and as a result we came to a unanimous conclusion that the fraternal relations so happily existent between the two masonic constitutions hitherto could continue no longer. The principle so strongly maintained by the Grand Lodge of England appears to be still unrecognized by the Grand Orient of France, but the Grand Lodge would welcome the reestablishment of this old Landmark in the Constitutions of the Grand Orient, and then would be in a position to renew fraternal relations with the latter.'⁴⁴²

Anticipating such a rebuff, the Grand Orient laid the ground for a public campaign to put its case in England, and contacted Bradlaugh. Bradlaugh had by this time been embroiled in the parliamentary oath controversy for nearly four years. He seems to have neglected Freemasonry during this time; many of the French refugees had returned home and the *Philadelphes* had been dissolved. Nevertheless, exhausted though he was after his hard struggles in Parliament, Bradlaugh was once again willing to take up the cudgels on behalf of

⁴⁴² A translation of Shadwell Clerke's reply is in the subject file 'Grand Orient of France'.

what he considered true Freemasonry. In November 1884, Bradlaugh visited Paris and became a member of the Lodge *Union et Persévérance*. On his return he made the following report to an executive meeting of the National Secular Society, attended by among others Annie Besant, Le Lubez and Bradlaugh's daughters:⁴⁴³

'Mr Bradlaugh reported that he had visited Paris, and it was possible that an effort would be made on behalf of the Grand Orient of France to explain real Freemasonry in this country. Mr Bradlaugh pointed out that Masonry was condemned as irreligious by the Pope of Rome in every country, while the Earl of Carnarvon and other English aristocratic freemasons affirmed it to be Christian, and excommunicated French Freemasons. As a matter of fact it was essentially non-religious and democratic. The Grand Orient of France had banished all religious texts and formulas from its ritual while not opposed to any form of religion, leaving nothing which ought to offend either believers or unbelievers, who would all be members. It was probable that a public meeting on this subject would shortly be held at St James Hall.'

On 1 March 1885, the *National Reformer* carried a leading article by Bradlaugh on 'Freemasonry in England and France'.⁴⁴⁴ It described how a 'grave difficulty' had arisen between the masonic authorities of the Grand Lodge of England and the brethren belonging to Lodges under the jurisdiction of the Grand Orient of France.

'Efforts having been ineffectually made by the Supreme Council of the Grand Orient to remove this difference by fraternal action, it

becomes absolutely necessary to submit the whole question to the judgement of an enlightened public opinion.'

Bradlaugh proceeded to repeat the key points of the Grand Orient's case, and reproduced Shadwell Clerke's response to the Grand Orient's letter. Bradlaugh promised a series of articles which would examine the matter in more depth.

Two articles by Bradlaugh on English and French Freemasonry duly appeared in the April and May numbers of *Our Corner*, a new Freethought journal edited by Annie Besant.⁴⁴⁵ *Our Corner* reflected the impact of a recent ruling in a blasphemy case against G. W. Foote, a supporter of Bradlaugh, which stated that blasphemy depended on the nature of the language used. With its thoroughly respectable, even prudish, appearance, and its 'Scientific Corner' and 'Gardening Corner', *Our Corner* was intended to show how Freethought could be combined with respectability.⁴⁴⁶ Bradlaugh's two *Our Corner* articles on Freemasonry were afterwards reprinted by the Freethought Press as a single pamphlet: *What Freemasonry Is, What It Has Been, and What It Ought To Be*.⁴⁴⁷ This pamphlet was to be Bradlaugh's final testament on Freemasonry.

Bradlaugh begins by reviewing the wide variety of opinions about the relationship between Freemasonry and religion. He cites a speech made by the Prince of Wales in November 1883, who had said that Freemasonry must be

⁴⁴³ *National Reformer* (7 December 1884), p. 375.

⁴⁴⁴ *Op. cit.* (1 March 1885), pp. 193-4.

⁴⁴⁵ *Our Corner* 5 (Jan.-July 1885), pp. 193-198, 257-260.

⁴⁴⁶ Marsh, *op. cit.*, pp. 133, 229.

⁴⁴⁷ A copy is in the British Library, pressmark 4783.cc.11(4).

religious and that:

‘...as long as religion remains engrafted in the hearts of the Craft in our country, the Craft is certain to flourish; and be certain of this, brethren, that when religion in it ceases, the Craft will also lose its power and stability.’

Bradlaugh contrasted with this a Papal Encyclical of 1884 which stated that Freemasons were supporters of the doers of evil:

‘Publicly and in the face of Heaven they undertake to ruin the Holy Church, in order, if it be possible, to completely rob Christian nations of the benefits owing to the Saviour Jesus Christ.’

How can these two statements be reconciled, asked Bradlaugh? Surveying a wide range of statements about Freemasonry and religion, citing commentators ranging from Hutchinson and Mackenzie to Louis Blanc and Dr Louis Aimable, the *Orateur* of the Grand Orient, Bradlaugh illustrates how different masonic bodies having taken opposite views on issues of religious belief:

‘Is Freemasonry an institution atheistic and revolutionary in its tendencies, such as is painted from the Vatican? Or as denounced by the Roman Catholic Bishop of Nottingham? Or is it fairly presented as an almost orthodox Christian fraternity, as by the declarations and practices of the Grand Lodge of England? or is there one Freemasonry of England and the English colonies and another of the European continent? and if it be true that there is difference of doctrine and of practice in any of the great masonic bodies, then which of these represents the truer Freemasonry?’

Is Freemasonry real in England as an institution on the whole fairly charitable, but specially noteworthy for its lodge dinners and social gatherings, and its high aristocracy of office? or is it real as in France, Italy, Belgium, as an institution in which equality is advocated and

sought in fraternity by the education of the ignorant, the enfranchisement of the enslaved, the strengthening of the weak?’

The explanation was, declared Bradlaugh, that there were two masonic currents drifting in very different directions. In England and Scotland, the spirit of the Stuart and Jacobite period had survived in masonic circles, so that all British masonic lodges supported Royalism and respectability. Thus, in the Tory reaction of 1819, Freemasonry had been exempted from the legislation against all kinds of associations. In France, since the time of the French Revolution, Freemasonry had preserved a strongly democratic tradition.

‘In England, since the cessation of Jacobite plots, the carefully guarded forms, signs, and pass words have concealed nothing that all the world, enemies and friends, might not have known; they were as the elaborate letter lock to the empty iron chest. In France and Italy the lodge doors served as shields to the proscribed; the grip and word often sufficed to denote and guarantee the imperilled brother struggling for human redemption under conditions always of great difficulty, and sometimes of serious danger. In England an advertisement card or signboard showed that the brethren expected commercial preferences. On the continent the help given was to the fraternal worker for human freedom.

For Bradlaugh, the spirit of modern Freemasonry was summed up by a recent speech at the annual assembly of the Grand Orient, which stated that the purpose of Freemasonry was the preparation of mankind for the solution of the many and complex issues making up what was known as the social question, namely the many forms of human suffering. Freemasonry would help solve

these not by revolution or predetermined systems, but by the application of principles of charity, tolerance and brotherhood, so as progressively to reduce human suffering. But, above all, for Bradlaugh true Freemasonry was a means of affirming tolerance and of saving mankind from bigotry:

‘True Freemasonry should be of no religion. The Scotch Chaplain who, in his printed speech, points to the Bible used in the lodges and accepted as the word of God, forgets that this cannot be true for such Jews as are brethren – at any rate as far as the New Testament is concerned – nor for the Mahommedan brother. Yet there are most certainly hundreds of Jewish and Mahommedan freemasons. In Constantinople, in Odessa, in Cairo, as in Paris, Berlin, and London; in Ceylon and the Hawaiian Islands, as in Italy and Spain, there are masonic temples where those who are ranged to either pillar, as well as the illustrious seated in the east, are avowedly of distinct and often of opposing faiths. But under the temple roof the strife of creeds should be hushed, work should be the only worship: work for the redemption of long-suffering mankind.’

Once again, Bradlaugh’s intervention failed to spark off the public debate about the nature of Freemasonry for which he longed. This was probably due as much as anything to the ineffectual nature of La France Lodge as a weapon against the Grand Orient. La France prospered as a lodge, but its members took little interest in Freemasonry in France. In 1899, a Grand Orient Lodge, Hiram, was established in London.⁴⁴⁸ Among those invited to attend the consecration of Hiram Lodge was the Master Elect of La France, who wrote in a puzzled

⁴⁴⁸ Combes, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

way to Great Queen Street asking if masons holding a certificate from the English Grand Lodge were allowed to visit the new French lodge.⁴⁴⁹ However, perhaps Bradlaugh’s efforts on behalf of the Grand Orient did bear some fruit. A recent article by Raymond Salzmänn has described how, in 1893, a group of Freethinkers in Swansea established the Tawe Lodge, the first Grand Orient Lodge to be established on British soil.⁴⁵⁰

It is tempting also to think that Bradlaugh’s enthusiasm for Freemasonry influenced Annie Besant and was partly responsible for her interest in co-masonry. Certainly Bradlaugh helped lay the foundations of Besant’s knowledge of Freemasonry. She was joint publisher of his masonic pamphlets and was present at the meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Secular Society in 1884 when Bradlaugh reported on his visit to the Grand Orient in Paris. However, Besant became a co-mason long after Bradlaugh’s death and her Initiation was probably due far more to her theosophical interests than any residual influence of Bradlaugh.

Patron of the Royal masonic Institution for Boys

⁴⁴⁹ The letter is filed with the lodge returns. It prompted a circular from Letchworth as Grand Secretary to the Masters of all lodges reminding them that English masons were barred from visiting Hiram Lodge, and that English lodges should not receive members of the Hiram Lodge as visitors: subject file ‘Grand Orient of France’.

⁴⁵⁰ Raymond Salzmänn, “‘Tawe’/‘Harmony Lodge’ (GODF): *La vie et mort d’une loge du Pays de Galles*”, *La Revue de l’Institut d’Étude et de Recherches Maçonniques Septentrion* 2002 no. 1, pp. 97-105.

The mourners at Bradlaugh's funeral in 1891 reflected the bewildering variety of his interests and connections. There were representatives of the Women's Franchise League, the Vaccination Commission, the Markets Rights and Tolls Commission, the Financial Reform Association, the Good Templars, Toynbee Hall and the Brighton Anarchists, as well as delegates of political groups and secular societies from all over the country. But perhaps the most surprising delegate at the funeral was a representative of the Royal Masonic Institution for Boys.⁴⁵¹ The letters of condolence received by Bradlaugh's daughter included the following dated 23 February 1891 from the Secretary to the RMIB:

'I beg to inform you that at a recent meeting of the Council of the Institution it was resolved

That the Council expresses its deep sympathy and condolence with the relations of the late Charles Bradlaugh M.P. and Patron of this Institution, in the loss they have sustained by his early death.

Permit me at the same time to add my personal sympathy, having learnt from close acquaintance to admire the conscientiousness and generosity of your lamented Father.'⁴⁵²

Bradlaugh had first made a donation of five guineas to the RMIB in 1866, becoming a Life Governor.⁴⁵³ He continued to make this annual donation for the rest of his

life, so that he had, at the time *The Freemason* described his admission into Freemasonry as 'vicious', been a Life Governor of the RMIB for ten years. In the years immediately before his death, Bradlaugh had substantially increased his contributions, making him one of the largest individual donors to the RMIB. Bradlaugh was frequently in desperate financial straits, which makes his generosity and commitment to the RMIB even more striking. This was not at all, as the following report from *The Freemason* (which even after Bradlaugh's death could not resist a jibe suggesting that the ideas of conscience and atheism were incompatible) records:

'Many of our readers are probably aware that the late Mr Bradlaugh, junior MP for the borough of Northampton, was once upon a time a freemason, though it is so many years since he threw up his connection with the Craft that the fact^{1,3,5} has probably been overlooked or forgotten. It may not, however, be generally known that by his death the Royal Masonic Institution for Boys has lost a staunch friend and generous supporter. Of late years Mr Bradlaugh has found it necessary on sundry occasions to seek a remedy at law against people who libelled him. These cases were generally settled in his favour, and a sum of money as a kind of solatium for his wounded honour was paid over to the late honorable member. But to his credit, be it said, Mr Bradlaugh, though commonly reputed to be far from a rich man, never used any of this money for his own purposes. Instead of this he handed over the amount to our boy's school and by his successive donations constituted himself a Patron of that institution. To the end of December 1888, he had given it over sixty pounds, and was a Vice-President; in 1889 he gave a further one hundred pounds, and became a Vice-Patron; last year he added to his

⁴⁵¹ Tribe, *op. cit.*, p. 289.

⁴⁵² Bishopsgate Institute, Bradlaugh Papers, No. 2220. Reproduced in the microfilm edition of the Bradlaugh Papers.

⁴⁵³ Bradlaugh's donations are recorded in the annual reports of the RMIB.

previous payments fifty two pounds ten shillings, and thus became a Patron.⁴⁵⁴

Acknowledgements

Ellic Howe, the most remarkable of English masonic researchers, first suggested that Bradlaugh's masonic career deserved investigation and noted that the British Library held pamphlets by Bradlaugh on Freemasonry which were not at Great Queen Street. I am sad that I never met Ellic Howe, but would like to dedicate this paper to his memory. As with all research into English Freemasonry, this paper could not have been completed without the unfailingly friendly and efficient service of Rebecca Coombes, Katrina Jowett and the team in the Library at Great Queen Street. I am also grateful for the assistance and advice of Michel Brodsky, *Professor* Måire Cross, Robert Gilbert, John Hamill, Pierre Mollier, *Professor* Aubrey Newman, Raymond Salzmänn and Estelle Stubbs. The responsibility for all errors is, of course, entirely mine. This paper not only bears testament to the remarkable collections at Great Queen Street, but also to the importance of the masonic holdings of the British Library. The prescience of the 19th-century librarians at the British Museum in ordering runs of *Le Monde Maçonnique* and *La Chaîne d'Union* covering the key years in the history of French Freemasonry can only be marvelled at. The only disappointment at the British Library is that François Tafery apparently failed to deposit in the British Museum the numbers of *La Chaîne d'Union* printed in London.

All petitions, correspondence, subject files and other archival material are in the collections of the United Grand Lodge of England in the Library and Museum of Freemasonry at Freemasons' Hall, London, unless otherwise stated.

⁴⁵⁴ *The Freemason* (7 February 1891), p. 75. See also Tribe, *op. cit.*, pp. 169, 268, and Hypatia Bradlaugh afterwards Bonner, *op. cit.*, p. 206.

Freemasonry and the History of the Labour Party in London: Some Approaches

Lecture to Labour Heritage, November 2002

I've been Director of the new Centre for Research into Freemasonry at the University of Sheffield for almost three years now. I was formerly a curator in the Department of Manuscripts of the British Library, and had no previous scholarly interest in freemasonry. The attraction for me of this work at Sheffield has been the opportunity to explore an archive which has not previously been much used by scholars. I was very pleased to attend the previous conference organised by Labour Heritage earlier this year, and was looking forward to spending a day hearing about subjects other than freemasonry. So, imagine my surprise, when following Dan Weinbren's paper, which emphasised the importance of examining social networks, somebody asked about the relevance of the study of freemasonry to the history of the Labour party. I was so amazed that I didn't say anything at the time, and I think that is what prompted Sean to suggest that I might talk to you at greater length today.

Let me begin by stating that I am not a freemason myself, and that nothing I have seen since starting this work has made me wish to become one. English freemasonry is an archaic and old-fashioned institution, a curious Victorian survival, whose atmosphere reminds

me of the Anglican church of my childhood in the 1950s - something I have no wish to return to. However, I am funded by freemasons. The Centre at Sheffield, the first Centre in a British university devoted to the study of freemasonry, is funded by the United Grand Lodge of England, the governing body of freemasonry in England and Wales, the Yorkshire West Riding province, the province which includes Sheffield, and Lord Northampton, the current Pro Grand Master. These funds are administered by an independent trust, and, by their own request, these masonic groups have no involvement in the administration or research agenda of the Centre. The University of Sheffield established this Centre not simply because it offered substantial research funding, but even more because of the opportunity it presented to explore the rich inheritance of archives, books and artefacts held by freemasonry. The Centre has been given special access to the records held by English freemasonry, and much of my work over the past couple of years has consisted of a preliminary exploration of these archives.

Freemasonry began in Britain, probably evolving in Scotland from guilds of working stone masons, and emerged in its modern form with the establishment of an English Grand Lodge in 1717. Freemasonry rapidly became one of the largest and best organised clubs in Britain. It claims still to be the largest secular fraternal organisation in the country, with a membership in Great Britain of somewhere in the region of 300,000 men.

Internationally, the membership is in the region of eight million. Yet freemasonry has attracted only limited interest from professional historians in Britain. There are many reasons for this, but one is that the records of freemasonry have not been easily accessible. Stephen Yeo, for example, in his study of the social culture of Reading before the First World War, published in 1976, was told that the history of the town in the nineteenth century could not be understood without investigating the masons. He visited the local Masonic hall, but was not allowed to examine records there. From the 1980s, these attitudes changed, as a result of attacks on freemasonry by Stephen Knight and others, and masonic archives were opened up to scholars, particularly the substantial library and archive housed at Freemasons' Hall. This is now the Library and Museum of Freemasonry, a registered Museum with a full complement of professional staff, open daily to the public.

Most of the work I have so far undertaken has been in the Library and Museum of Freemasonry. The richness of these collections is apparent from a quick tour of the Museum, where there are some objects with striking London and national associations, including the maul allegedly used to lay the foundation stone of St Pauls cathedral, lodge furniture constructed from wood of Old London Bridge and of the Old Putney Bridge, and masonic regalia of figures ranging from Winston Churchill to Donald Campbell. But most fascinating of all are the library and archives. Many of the 40,000 or so

volumes there are simply not publicly accessible elsewhere. For example, I am interested in the history of Battersea. The first major scholarly study of Battersea's history was a history of the parish church by a local headmaster, John George Taylor. The Library and Museum of Freemasonry includes an otherwise unknown historical publication by Taylor, a history of a local masonic lodge, which reveals that he and a number of other prominent local inhabitants were keen freemasons. This history was privately printed, and no other copy is available elsewhere. The riches of the Library are not confined to lodge histories, valuable though these can be in local studies. Other useful categories which might be worth mentioning here are masonic periodicals, such as the weekly newspaper, *The Freemason*, published between 1869 and the Second World War, and provincial yearbooks, which frequently contain full details of membership in a particular county.

It is membership information, of course, that everybody is interested in, and investigation of the membership records has been one of my major preoccupations. Establishing whether or not somebody is a freemason can be surprisingly difficult, not because of any secrecy, but because of the structure of the records. The English Grand Lodge has been active now for nearly three hundred years, and its membership records have gone through a series of phases. Registers compiled from lodge returns were started in the eighteenth century. These were replaced by a card index in the 1930s, and

then replaced by a database in the 1980s. Recently a magazine for the membership has been begun, 'MQ' [Masonic Quarterly], and the process of mailing this magazine has revealed serious inaccuracies in the database. To make matters more complicated, the present United Grand Lodge was created by the amalgamation of two rival Grand Lodges in 1813, and prior to this date there are two parallel sets of records. Admission to freemasonry is performed by the local lodge, and occasionally lodge secretaries do not forward details of admissions to the Grand Lodge. For these reasons, even when an exhaustive search has been undertaken, one can never be certain whether or not somebody was a freemason. It has been suggested that George Jacob Holyoake, the nineteenth century freethinker, was a mason. His name cannot be located in the membership records, but it is still possible that he was admitted, and that his name simply cannot be traced. It is only in recent years that full details of the admission of the atheist MP Charles Bradlaugh to a lodge in Tottenham have been located.

Ideally, of course, one would like to work towards a database of membership information since 1717 but, for the reasons I have outlined, this will be a long-term undertaking. In the meantime, however, the importance of the archive at Freemasons' Hall can be best illustrated by the kind of information which emerges from correspondence about the formation and administration of masonic lodges. For example, Professor Owen

Ashton, the authority on chartist history, has recently completed a study of the Newcastle Chartist leader Richard Bagnall Reed. Reed was in later life a very active freemason, achieving high office in a branch of freemasonry known as Mark Masonry. The Library in Freemasons' Hall has a copy signed by Reed of a lecture by him that gives a vivid account of his reasons for being interested in freemasonry.

One of Reed's associates in Newcastle was a man called John Baxter Langley, a surgeon who had been a radical journalist in northern England, and who collaborated with Ernest Jones in the establishment of the *People's Paper*. Moving to London in the 1870s, Langley became the Chairman of the Artizans Labourers and General Dwellings Company, which helped pioneer the provision of good quality working class housing. Under Langley, the company developed the Shaftesbury Park Estate in Battersea, described by Langley as 'a workmen's city' and which, he claimed, influenced subsequent legislation on working class housing. Like Richard Bagnall Reed, Langley was a keen freemason. Langley was a controversial figure within masonry. Grand Lodge proposed making a charitable donation to mark the safe return of the Prince of Wales from India, and it was suggested that Grand Lodge should pay for the restoration of St Albans and St Pauls cathedrals. Langley, a unitarian, led a successful campaign against the proposal, saying it would cause offence to non-Christian masons, but himself causing great offence

when, in a letter to *The Freemason*, he described the carvings on medieval cathedrals as remnants of phallus worship.

In 1874 Langley wrote, as Chairman of the Artisans Labourers and General Dwellings Company, to the Grand Secretary at Freemasons Hall, describing the new estate at Battersea, and declaring that 'there is a desire on the part of the superior officials, superintendents of works and other residents on the estate to be admitted into masonry in a lodge connected with the new town; and the Directors cordially second that desire'. Langley himself would be the first master of the lodge, and the lodge would eventually meet in the public hall planned for the estate. Langley added that 'The petitioners specially desire that the first stone of the new lodge and public hall may be laid with masonic honours..'. Langley's proposal was an imaginative means of encouraging the working class inhabitants of the estate to take an interest in freemasonry, and the Grand Secretary took a personal interest in the scheme.

The signatories of the petition for the establishment of the Shaftesbury lodge were mostly people connected with the company who lived in various parts of London. Only one gave his address as the Shaftesbury Park Estate itself, a glass merchant named Solomon Frankenburg. In 1877 disaster overtook Langley. Much of the day-to-day supervision of the building work had been left to the

Company Secretary, William Swindlehurst (not apparently a mason). There were rumours of irregularity in the handling of funds and inadequate purchasing procedures. In June 1877 the company appointed a committee of inquiry. It was found that the board had given Swindlehurst supplies of blank cheques and that he had taken some of the profits from the sale of company land. A particular concern was that building materials had been purchased from a single merchant, Solomon Frankenburg, who had often charged twice the going rate. Frankenburg was, of course, a signatory of the petition for the Shaftesbury lodge. In July 1877 Swindlehurst and Langley were arrested for fraud, and in the following October they were sentenced to eighteen months imprisonment. Langley and Frankenburg were expelled from freemasonry, and the Grand Master cancelled the warrant for the Shaftesbury lodge. The case of John Baxter Langley illustrates the unexpected new insights which the archive at Freemasons' Hall can provide. It is well known that the company building the Shaftesbury Park Estate had a strong social agenda - there were for example no pubs on the estate - but the fact that this social engineering had a masonic dimension, and that the Shaftesbury Hall at the heart of the estate was the first purpose-built masonic hall in South London, has been otherwise unnoted.

Owen Ashton first noticed that Richard Bagnall Reed was a freemason from a reference in the *Dictionary of Labour Biography*. The *Dictionary* is an exception to the

comment I made earlier that British historians have taken little interest in the history of freemasonry. The contributors to the *Dictionary of Labour Biography* have generally been more thorough than, for example, their counterparts on the *Dictionary of National Biography*, and frequently notice membership of masonic lodges. The *Dictionary* consequently suggests some interesting themes for further investigation. Scottish freemasonry for example has always been much more working class than freemasonry in England, and the *Dictionary of Labour Biography* notes the large number of Scottish labour leaders who have been freemasons. A number of cooperative pioneers also joined freemasonry, presumably viewing it as a mutual organisation similar to the friendly societies of which they were also members. The bulk of the references to freemasonry in the *Dictionary* relate to membership of New Welcome Lodge No. 5139. Among the members of this lodge noted by the *Dictionary* were Ben Tillett, the Dockers' leader, Arthur Greenwood, the Deputy Leader of the Labour Party from 1935-54, and Alfred Short, a Home Office Minister in the Second Labour Government.

The reason for the prominence of the New Welcome Lodge in the *Dictionary* is that it is the parliamentary lodge. The qualification for membership of the lodge is that one should be a (male) Member of Parliament or work at the Palace of Westminster. Its existence was picked up by Hugh Dalton, who mentioned it in his diaries. In April 1938, Dalton was shown by William

Nield of the Labour Research Department a summons to a meeting of the New Welcome Lodge, held four days before the meeting of the Parliamentary Labour Party in 1935 at which Clement Atlee was confirmed as leader. Dalton had on this occasion supported Herbert Morrison for the leadership. The third candidate was Arthur Greenwood. Dalton found from the summons that Greenwood was a member of the New Welcome Lodge, and that the lodge secretary was Scott Lindsay, who organised Greenwood's leadership campaign. Moreover, another member of the lodge was F. J. Bellenger, who had attended a meeting organised by Dalton to support Morrison's membership and who, Dalton now suspected, had damaged Morrison's chances by talking to the press. In May 1939, Bellenger unsuccessfully tried to persuade Dalton to join the New Welcome Lodge. Dalton records that Bellenger said that 'there was no politics in Free Masonry, but that there was a wonderful sense of fellowship, etc.' A month later, Dalton suspected that the members of the New Welcome Lodge were manoeuvring again to try and secure the leadership for Greenwood while Atlee was ill in hospital with prostate trouble. Dalton considered the masonic group of Labour M.P.s 'a scandal', and urged Ellen Wilkinson to expose them in a newspaper article.

The references in Dalton's diary might lead one to suppose that the New Welcome Lodge simply shows that freemasonry is everywhere, but the papers relating to the formation of the lodge at Freemasons' Hall show it was a

very unusual lodge, and one that is perhaps unique in the history of English freemasonry, in that there was an avowedly political purpose to its formation.. In December 1928, a ceremony was held in connection with the High Cross Lodge at Tottenham - Charles Bradlaugh's former lodge. The Master of the lodge at that time was Sir Percy Rockcliff, who had held national office in freemasonry and was, as Secretary of the Joint Committee of Approved Societies, also active in the friendly society world. The ceremony was attended by Sir Percy Colville Smith, the Grand Secretary. A conversation developed about the difficulty of recruiting working class members to freemasonry in large urban areas such as London. Colville Smith described how the Prince of Wales (afterwards Duke of Windsor), at that time an active freemason, had expressed his concern that Labour MPs and officials of the party who were interested in becoming freemasons found it difficult to find a lodge which would accept them and that a number had been blackballed. The Prince had suggested setting up a lodge specifically for Labour MPs and officials. Rockcliff was aware on his part that at Labour Party conferences motions were regularly proposed that freemasons should not be trade union officials. These motions were generally defeated by moving next business, but left Rockcliff, as a freemason, concerned at the hostility. Rockcliff felt that the Prince's idea of a lodge for Labour MPs might also help address this issue.

At this time, of course, Labour were on the verge of forming its first majority government, while at the same time the effects of the depression were hitting hard. The formation of the New Welcome Lodge reflected the tense political situation in two ways: first, there was the concern, expressed explicitly by the Prince of Wales, that members of the governing party was not excluded from freemasonry, and, second, there was the wider belief, held particularly strongly by Rockcliff, that freemasonry could help ameliorate class conflict. The New Welcome Lodge was, in other words, a strategy to use freemasonry to help avert social revolution. Rockcliff forwarded a memorandum to Colville Smith outlining the philosophy of the new lodge, without explicitly revealing the Labour connection of the lodge. The aim of the lodge, he declared, was 'to bring home to the industrial section of the community the principles and tenets of the Craft.' 'It is doubtless true', Rockcliff wrote, 'that, in rural areas, social barriers are to some extent broken down in certain lodges which exist in those areas. But, as regards the great centres of population, the same position can hardly be said to obtain.' The members of the new lodge would be missionaries for freemasonry. It was a firm conviction of Rockcliff and others that freemasonry could help reduce 'unsettling influences' on the shop floor, and would encourage loyalty to the crown. Considerable thought was given as to how the reduce practical barriers to membership. Subscriptions would be kept to a minimum, and the meal after the lodge meeting would also be of a more 'homely' variety than the grand feasts

usually enjoyed by masonic lodges. Rockcliff proposed three names for the lodge: the Civitas Britannicus lodge; the Lodge of New Citizenship; and the 1929 Lodge. However, at the Prince of Wales' suggestion, the name of 'New Welcome' was chosen, as more indicative of its purpose.

Throughout these discussions, Rockcliff had carefully avoided committing to writing any explicit statement that the lodge was intended primarily for Labour MPs. The suggestion that the new badge of the lodge should incorporate Big Ben was turned down. The only MP to be involved in these negotiations was the Rev. Sir Herbert Dunnico, a Baptist minister who was at that time M.P. for Consett, and an influential parliamentary figure, as Chairman of Committees of the House of Commons. The other founders of the lodge had friendly society or trade union connections, such as John Bowen, the General Secretary of the Union of Post Office Workers, and Charles Sitch, the Secretary of the Chain Makers Society, both of whom had become MPs by the time the lodge was consecrated in November 1929. The lodge immediately began actively to recruit further sitting Labour MPs. The Freemason described how the first four initiates in the lodge were all Labour MPs: Sir Robert Young, the Deputy Speaker, Joseph Compton, J H Shillaker and Walter Henderson, the son of Arthur Henderson, at that time Foreign Secretary. Scott Lindsay, the Labour Party Secretary, was initiated soon afterwards, and Arthur Greenwood himself was initiated

as an entered apprentice in February 1931, made a fellow craft a month later and finally a Master Mason in April 1931. Over twenty Labour MPs were recruited over the next three years. They came from all parts of the country, but among London Labour MPs who joined the lodge may be noted George Hicks, MP for East Woolwich, who had ironically been creator of the Amalgamated Union of Building Operatives, one component of which was the Operative Stonemasons Society, and Charles Ammon, MP for North Camberwell, who had been Leader of the LCC. The lodge did not only recruiting MPs. Clerks and other employees of the House also joined, and others with no obvious connection with parliament, who were presumably connected with the Labour party in London.

By 1934, then, the New Welcome Lodge had certainly achieved the Prince of Wales' aim of ensuring that the parliamentary labour party was not alienated from freemasonry, and a substantial group of freemasons had been built up within the labour ranks. There is no indication however that it achieved much success in pursuing Percy Rockcliff's wider vision of taking freemasonry to the shop floor. However, the political situation had of course changed dramatically, with Ramsey Macdonald's creation of a National Government and the 1931 General Election in 1931 election, which saw Labour reduced to just 54 MPs. This reduced the pool of potential recruits to the New Welcome Lodge, so that in 1934, no MP came forward to join the lodge, and

it was decided to fundamentally alter its nature. It became a house facility of the Palace of Westminster, open to staff working there and to MPs of all parties. Its membership consequently ceased to be dominated by MPs and it was chiefly run by members of staff of the Palace of Westminster. By the time of the fiftieth anniversary of the lodge, the membership of the lodge stood at 58, but just seven of these were MPs, none of whom took a particularly active part in the life of the lodge. Between 1934 and 1980, only three MPs served as Masters of the lodge; otherwise the Masters were all members of staff of the Palace of Westminster. The change in the nature of the lodge was indicated by the abandoning of its original badge, showing an ever open door, and its replacement with a badge incorporating the portcullis of the House of Commons.

The chief connection of the New Welcome Lodge has been with the parliamentary labour party and as such it may not seem to have much direct relevance to the labour party in London. However, the story of the New Welcome Lodge does point to a number of other themes which are relevant to the history of Labour in London. A particular concern of Sir Percy Rockcliff in setting up the New Welcome Lodge was the problem of organising freemasonry in large urban areas. Although modern freemasonry began in London and London remains very much a powerhouse of freemasonry, there has always been a strong distinction between London freemasonry and freemasonry elsewhere. In the eighteenth and

nineteenth centuries, lodges were geographically based, usually two or three in a small town, and the only connection between its members tended to be a geographical one. In the provinces, a strong provincial organisation emerged, based broadly on county structures, with provincial officers keeping a close eye on the different lodges. London, however, was different. As it grew, it was hard for lodges to define their identity geographically. In the Greater London area, no provincial structure was ever established, and lodges were administered directly by Grand Lodge. Attempts to create locally based lodges in the new London suburbs in the nineteenth century faltered, as difficulties of accommodation and other issues meant that the new lodges moved inexorably into facilities in central London and lost touch with their local roots.

This led from the late nineteenth century onwards to the growth in London and then elsewhere of lodges based on social connections other than geography. The first expression of this was the establishment of old school lodges, followed by university and polytechnic lodges. The growth of public services in the late nineteenth century had helped create a new class of public sector professionals, such as teachers, vestry clerks and civil engineers. These new vestry and council officials saw freemasonry as a form of social activity suitable for a respectable and temperate middle class, and formed lodges based around their professional connections. The Crichton lodge in Camberwell was formed by members

of the London School Board. Teachers from the Crichton lodge afterwards formed a lodge which met for a time in the masonic hall in Battersea built by John Baxter Langley. The New Welcome Lodge at Westminster had been anticipated by the Gallery Lodge, a lodge for lobby correspondents. The New Welcome was sponsored by the Insuranto lodge, which was intended for staff of insurance and benefit societies. It is in the context of the emergence of these kinds of special interest lodges that the development of the New Welcome lodge needs to be considered.

With the introduction of new borough councils in 1900, there was inevitably a demand for lodges associated with these councils, and many lodges intended for councillors and council employees were established. Curiously, many of these continued in existence after the local government reorganisation in 1964, so that there are still, for example, Holborn Borough Council and Camberwell Borough Council lodges which meet today. The fact that these lodges relate to councils which haven't existed for nearly forty years emphasises I think that their primary function is social. However, in general, the growth of special interest lodges carries a risk of creating tension within the organisation in which the lodge exists, as the reaction of both Dalton and Morrison to the New Welcome lodge illustrates. In London, this problem is exacerbated by the lack of any local administrative structure for the London lodges similar to that in the provinces. All matters relating to the London lodges have

been handled direct by Grand Lodge and its Board of General Purposes, a clumsy mechanism to say the least, a fact which has now been recognised and, for the first time, a Metropolitan Grand Lodge is about to be created.

It is perhaps too early to write the story of the major engagement of London labour with freemasonry, the controversies about masonic influence within councils such as Wandsworth, Tower Hamlets and Hackney which rumbled on from the time of the Poulson scandal to the mid 1980s. However, in considering these controversies, certainly these issues relating to the organisation of London freemasonry will need to be taken into account. Another strand which will need to be teased out are the differing attitudes to freemasonry within the Labour movement. One element of this which needs to be borne in mind is the involvement of figures in the radical and Labour movements with masonic activity outside the limited world of English craft freemasonry. As already mentioned, Charles Bradlaugh was a freemason. Bradlaugh was contemptuous of official English freemasonry, and strongly supported French freemasonry, which was excommunicated by the English Grand Lodge in the 1870s because of its increasingly aggressive stance on political and religious matters. French freemasonry developed into a very left-wing movement, which supported republican principles in France, pioneered anti-racist campaigning and helped introduce early welfare provision in France.

It was in France that Annie Besant became interested in freemasonry, and Annie Besant helped to establish in Britain a form of freemasonry known as co-masonry which admits both men and women. Co-masonry became an important part of the early women's movement, and suffragette marches included contingents of women masons. Among those who joined co-masonry were such major figures of the left as Beatrice Webb and Charlotte Despard. One of the mysteries of freemasonry is why freemasonry in the English-speaking world became a loyalist association run by aristocrats, whereas in France, Spain and elsewhere it became a focus of liberal politics and discussion. It is in Spain that the last irony of this story emerges. After Hugh Dalton found out about the New Welcome Lodge, he began to see masons everywhere, and felt that the masons in the Labour party were conspiring against Atlee. In Spain, freemasonry provided an important focus of anti-catholicism, and during the Spanish Civil War there were many active masonic lodges among the Republican forces. Spanish researchers have recently suggested that Atlee himself became a member of such a masonic lodge in Spain, something of which Dalton was completely unaware.

IV
MASONRY BEFORE 1717

The Earliest Use of the Word ‘Freemason’

*Note for publication in the Yearbook of the Grand
Lodge of Scotland, 2004*

It has hitherto been thought that the earliest appearance of the English word ‘freemason’ was in 1376. At the symposium organised by Lodge Hope of Kurrachee No. 337 at Kirkcaldy in May 2003, Professor Andrew Prescott, Director of the Centre for Research into Freemasonry, University of Sheffield, drew attention to some earlier records of the word. This is the relevant section of his address at Kirkcaldy.

It is commonly assumed that the stonemasons of the middle ages are obscure, anonymous people who have escaped the historical record, but medieval administrative records, such as building accounts, contain an enormous amount of information about stonemasons and their craft. For example, the journal of the clerk of the works at Eton for 1444-5 records the name of every stonemason, carpenter, dauber, smith and labourer employed on the works, and gives details of the hours worked by each man. These records are usually in Latin or French. The general Latin terms used for stonemasons were

cementarius or *lathomus*. The French word *masoun*, usually spelt *mazon*, first appears in the twelfth century. There were many different grades and specialisms among the stonemasons, and these were described either by qualifying the general word for stonemason, so that the Eton records refer to *lathomos vocati hardehewers* (the stonemasons known as hardhewers), or by the use of specialist words, such as the Latin *cubitores* for cutters or *imaginatores* for image makers.

The freemasons were such a specialist grade of stonemason, who specialised in the carving of freestone, which was, in the words of Douglas Knoop and Gwilym Jones, ‘the name given to any fine-grained sandstone or limestone that can be freely worked in any direction and sawn with a toothed saw’. Freestone was used for the decoration of capitals and cornices, the cutting of tracery, and the carving of images and gargoyles. The London Assize of Wages of 1212 refers in Latin to *sculptores lapidum liberorum* (sculptors of freestone). The Statute of Labourers of 1351, which attempted to regulate wages and contracts in the wake of the labour shortage caused by the Black Death, uses an equivalent French term: *mestre meson de franche peer* (master mason of freestone). Freemasons as a distinct grade of stonemasons can thus be traced back to the early thirteenth century, but for today’s Free and Accepted Masons, there is naturally a particular interest in trying to locate the first appearance of the word ‘freemason’ in English.

In 1376, John of Northampton was elected Mayor of London. Northampton was determined to break the hold of the existing merchant oligarchy on London's government and to give less wealthy citizens a greater voice in the city's affairs. One means by which he sought to do this was by changing the method of electing the city's common council. It was ordained the councillors should henceforth be nominated by particular trades in the city rather than by wards. The nominations made by the various crafts to the common council in 1376 are recorded in two of the city's official records, the Plea and Memoranda Rolls and the London Letter Books (the relevant volume is the one designated by the letter 'H'). Four representatives of the stonemasons were nominated to the common council: Thomas Wrek, John Lesnes, John Artelburgh and Robert Henwick. In the Plea and Memoranda Roll, they are described as 'masons'. In the Letter Book they were at first described as 'freemasons', but this word has been struck through by the scribe and replaced with the word 'masons'. This has hitherto been the earliest identified appearance of the word in English. Probably the alteration was the result of scribal error, but in the politically charged atmosphere of Northampton's mayoralty the change may have been more significant, perhaps suggesting that the representatives were originally been drawn from a particular group of stonemasons.

However, the word 'freemason' also appears in the records of the Corporation of London much earlier in the fourteenth century. The coroners' rolls of the city contain an account of an escape from Newgate prison in 1325. This is summarised in the *Calendar of the Coroners' Rolls of the City of London, 1300-1378*, edited by Reginald Sharpe and published in 1913 (pp. 130-1). The coroner and sheriffs of the city held an inquiry into the gaol break. Jurors from the wards of Farringdon, Castle Baynard, Bread Street and Aldgate, stated that on 8 September 1325, at about midnight, Adam Nouneman of Hockcliffe in Bedfordshire, John Gommere, Robert de Molseleye, John de Elme, Alan Mariot and John de Parys, Stephen de Keleseye, William le Soutere, Walter, son of Beatrice Gomme, and John Bedewynde escaped through a hole in the western wall of Newgate prison. Some of the prisoners were recaptured, but others sought sanctuary in the churches of St Sepulchre's church near Newgate and St Bride's in Fleet Street. The jurors also declared that the escaped prisoners were assisted by various men, presumably also at that prisoners in Newgate. Those who abetted the escape were said to have included one Nicholas le Freemason. Convicted criminals were at that time allowed to escape punishment provided they agreed to leave the kingdom and live abroad. Four of those involved in this prison escape duly left the country from Dover and Southampton, but there is no record of what happened to Nicholas le Freemason.

We cannot by any means be sure that this is the earliest appearance of the English word 'freemason'. The word almost certainly appears somewhere else, hidden away in the great mass of unpublished medieval administrative records which remain largely unexplored by masonic scholars. Moreover, Nicholas's name may represent a French form of the word 'freemason', and this illustrates the difficulty in firmly identifying the earliest English use of the word. We are on slightly firmer ground with literary texts, and at least one medieval English poem dating from before 1376 contains the word 'freemason'.

The romance *Floris and Blancheflour* is in Middle English, but was probably adapted from a French original sometime between 1250 and 1300. It is a good example of the kind of literary entertainment which was extremely popular among well-off people in medieval England. A Christian lady was captured by the Saracens in Spain who made her a lady-in-waiting to their queen. The Queen and the lady-in-waiting both have babies on the same day. The Saracen queen has a boy named Floris (flower) and the Christian lady a girl named Blancheflour (white flower). The children were brought up together, but the King, disturbed by their love for one another, decided that they should be separated. Blancheflour was sold as a slave, and was bought by an emir in Babylon who intended to marry her. Floris travels to Babylon to seek his love. Arriving at Babylon, Floris is told by Daris, the keeper of the bridge into the city, that Blancheflour is kept in a high tower in the city, and that

the emir would soon claim her as a wife. Daris describes the tower as follows (the following modern version of the text is by Professor Peter Baker of the University of Virginia):

*It is a hundred fathoms high; whoever beholds it from far
or near can see that it is a hundred fathoms altogether.
Without an equal, it is made of limestone and marble;
there's not another such place in all the world. The
mortar is made so well that neither iron nor steel can
break it. The finial placed above is made with such pride
that one has no need to burn a torch or lantern in the
tower: the finial that was set there shines at night like the
sun. Now there are forty two noble bowers in that tower;
the man who could dwell in one of them would be happy,
for he would never need to long for greater bliss.*

Floris is perplexed and distressed, and begs Daris for advice as to how he can reach Blancheflour in the impetrable tower. Daris is ready with a plan:

*Dear son, you have done well to place your trust in me.
The best advice I know – and I know no other advice – is
to go to the tower tomorrow as if you were a good
craftsman. Take the square and measure in your hand as
if you were a freemason ('Take on py honde squyer and
scantlon, As þow were a free mason'). Look up and down
the tower. The porter is cruel and villainous; he'll come
to you immediately and ask what kind of man you are
and accuse you of some crime, claiming you to be a spy.*

*And you will answer sweetly and mildly and say to him
that you are a craftsman come to look at the beautiful
tower, meaning to make one like it in your land.*

The scheme works, and Floris and Blaunchefflower are reunited. After many further trials and tribulations, in which the couple are threatened with beheading and death by fire, there is the inevitable happy ending, with the couple marrying and Blaunchefflower becoming Floris's queen after the death of his father.

Thus *Floris and Blancheflower* contains an English reference to a freemason which apparently dates from the late thirteenth century. Inevitably, however, the textual situation is more complicated than it appears at first sight, and the word freemason may perhaps have been added to the poem sometime during the fourteenth century. One of the earliest surviving copies of this poem is in the Auchinleck manuscript, one of the great treasures of the National Library of Scotland (a digital facsimile and edition of which is now available on the National Library's website). The Auchinleck manuscript dates from the 1330s. In this copy of *Floris and Blancheflower*, the word mason is used rather than freemason:

*And nim in þin hond squir and scantiloun
Als þai þou were a masoun;*

The most complete copy of the poem is in British Library, Egerton MS. 2862, a manuscript which previously belonged to George Granville Leveson Gower, 2nd Duke of Sutherland and dates from the late fourteenth century. Here the word 'free mason' is used, rather than mason. This suggests that the term freemason did not appear in the thirteenth century text of *Floris and Blancheflower*, but was only inserted in the poem sometime after 1330. In order to establish the exact circumstances of the appearance of the word 'freemason' in *Floris and Blancheflower*, further investigation of the textual and manuscript traditions of this poem is necessary.

The Regius and Cooke Manuscripts: Some New Contexts

Paper presented to the Fourth International Conference at the Canonbury Masonic Research Centre, November 2003

On 24 June 1721, John, 2nd Duke of Montagu, was elected Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Freemasons in London. This was a momentous event for the fledgling Grand Lodge, since it was the first time since its creation four years previously that a nobleman had accepted the office of Grand Master. Among those present was the antiquary William Stukeley, who afterwards benefitted greatly from Montagu's patronage. In his diary, Stukeley described how during the meeting Montagu's predecessor as Grand Master, George Payne, produced 'an old manuscript of the Constitutions which he got in the west of England, over 500 years old'. Stukeley made drawings of the manuscript which establish that the volume produced by Payne was this one, which is today Additional Manuscript 23198 in the British Library, known, after its first editor, as the Cooke manuscript.

The Cooke manuscript is in middle English and the appearance of its handwriting suggests that it was compiled in about 1420. It contains a legendary history of the craft of stonemasonry and regulations for stonemasons. Its exhibition by Payne at Grand Lodge probably contributed to Grand Lodge's decision at its

next meeting to ask James Anderson to produce a digest of the constitutions of freemasonry. In preparing his Constitutions, Anderson claimed to have rescued these texts from the corruption introduced into them in the 'dark illiterate ages'. His editing was highly creative, and although a few brief passages in the 1723 Constitutions including the final line, 'Amen So Mote It Be', were based on the Cooke manuscript, Anderson's work bears little relationship to Cooke or any other surviving pre-1717 charges. The Cooke manuscript apparently remained in the possession of Grand Lodge and the third Grand Secretary William Reid made two calligraphic transcripts of it in about 1728. Afterwards, however, it left masonic custody and it was eventually purchased by the British Museum in 1859, being published for the first time by the Canonbury freemason Matthew Cooke two years later.

In 1839, the nineteen-year-old scholar James Orchard Halliwell was researching the early history of mathematics. He found among the manuscripts from the Old Royal Library in the British Museum a middle English poem described as 'A poem of moral duties, here entitled Constitutions of the Art of Geometry according to Euclid', which contained ordinances for stonemasons. Halliwell immediately recognised the interest of this text for freemasons, and described his discovery in a paper to the Society of Antiquaries in April 1839, publishing a transcript of the poem the following year. This is the manuscript found by Halliwell. It also dates from the

early fifteenth century. It is now Royal Manuscript 17.A.1 in the British Library and, because of its royal provenance, it is known as the Regius Manuscript. While many other manuscripts containing early regulations for stonemasons have since been traced – at the last count there were over a hundred – the Cooke and Regius manuscripts are still the only medieval texts of this kind to have been identified.

In considering freemasonry and literature at this conference, we are concentrating on famous literary figures who were freemasons, and considering the influence of freemasonry on their life and work. However, the Regius and Cooke manuscripts remind us that literary texts, whether in the form of charges, ritual or writing about freemasonry, are at the heart of freemasonry itself. But Regius and Cooke are not of interest only to freemasons. The medieval scholar Helen Cam made a spirited defence of medieval local studies many years ago in which she stressed the enormous impact of the middle ages on modern life. The Regius and Cooke manuscripts are dramatic illustrations of this, since these short medieval texts have helped shape one of the modern world's largest and most influential social organisations. They have had perhaps the most remarkable career of any medieval texts.

The critical literature on the Old Charges is immense, dwarfing the bibliographies of many more famous medieval texts. However, these studies concentrate on

the classification of the surviving versions of the Old Charges and devote less attention to their historical context. This concern with classification is so intense that it sometimes almost obliterates the text itself. For example, when the discovery of a new 18th-century transcript of the Old Charges by the Newcastle lawyer George Grey was reported in 1999, the manuscript was described purely in terms of its textual relationships, making it impossible to tell what the actual manuscript says. The Old Charges have become progressively divorced from their historical context, squeezing life from them. The Chaucerian scholar David Wallace has recently lamented that the Canterbury Tales have suffered a similar fate. He argues that it is necessary to restore Chaucer's text to the movement of history, 'to recognise its own sense of precariousness in occupying a time and place that shifts even at the instant of its own articulation'. There is a pressing need to perform a similar service for Regius and Cooke and to restore them to the medieval world.

An important contribution to this endeavour has recently been made by the young American scholar Lisa Cooper in an article published in the *Journal of the Early Book Society*. She seeks to establish what Regius and Cooke tell us about the mentality of medieval artisans. She shows how the texts sought to inculcate a sense of community among the stonemasons and how they reflected a pride in their work. Hitherto it has been assumed that medieval artisans expressed their self-

esteem through the exuberance of their craftsmanship. Cooper points out that Regius and Cooke show that artisans could also articulate their loyalty to the craft through intellectual and symbolic constructs. Cooper argues that in this respect Regius and Cooke are extremely unusual. However, despite Cooper's thorough analysis, at the end of the day no clear sense emerges of who produced these texts, why they were created, and their intended audience. They remain enigmatic.

The Regius manuscript has been dated from its handwriting *circa* 1390, but it includes extracts from the *Instructions for Parish Priests* by John Mirk, which was completed between 1400 and 1415. This suggests that Regius should instead be dated *circa* 1410. Regius contains 794 lines of Middle English verse in a dialect which the Middle English scholar Douglas Hamer considered to be that spoken in the south-west Midlands at the turn of the fifteenth century. The poem begins by describing how the great clerk Euclid devised geometry and gave it the name of masonry in order to provide employment of the children of great lords and ladies living in Egypt. Euclid ordained that, although there were masters among the masons, they should nevertheless treat each other as equals, 'neither subject nor servant'. Regius states that masonry came to England in the reign of Athelstan (presumably Athelstan the grandson of King Alfred, who reigned from 924 to 939). To regulate the craft, Athelstan made a series of ordinances, which the poem lists. The themes emphasised by these articles and

points include the importance of the general assembly of masons, which all masons were expected to attend, the need for fair pay, and the necessity of masons treating each other as fellows, helping each other in their work, serving each other at meals and avoiding recourse to litigation.

After reiterating that these ordinances were established by Athelstan, Regius recounts the story of the Four Crowned Martyrs, the christian stonemasons who were martyred by a Roman Emperor. This is probably drawn from a popular hagiographical collection such as the Golden Legend. Regius then returns to the origins of stonemasonry. It describes the destruction of the Tower of Babel because of the pride of its builders. Euclid afterwards revived the art of masonry and devised the system dividing knowledge into the seven liberal arts of grammar, dialectic, rhetoric, music, astronomy and geometry. Regius concludes with general precepts for good living drawn from two sources. Over a hundred lines are drawn from the *Instructions for Parish Priests* compiled between 1400 and 1415 by the Augustinian monk John Mirk, who was Prior of Lilleshall in Shropshire. These concern behaviour when attending mass. They are followed by another English poem known as 'Urbanitatis' or 'Politeness'. This is an example of a courtesy book, a form of etiquette manual popular in both Latin and English during the fifteenth century. 'Urbanitatis' for example was used to improve the manners of the henchmen of Edward IV's court. It urges

its readers for example to take off their hats in church, not speak with a full mouth and avoid spitting or sniffing when addressing a lord.

The Cooke manuscript has been dated, again from its handwriting, to *circa* 1420, so the two manuscripts are broadly contemporary. It is in Middle English prose which Hamer again suggested corresponded to a dialect of the south west Midlands. The structure of Cooke's text is simpler than that in Regius. It begins with a history of stonemasonry which considerably expands that in Regius. It opens with an elaborate invocation to God, who had made all things to be subject to man. God had given man knowledge of crafts, including geometry. The seven liberal arts are then listed. Clearly, the author declares, geometry is at the root of them all, since geometry means measurement of the earth, and all tools involve measurement and are made of materials from the earth. All the crafts of the world, he continues, were founded by the sons of Lamach, who were mentioned in Genesis, with Lamach's eldest son Jabal inventing geometry. Lamech's sons wrote their discoveries on two pillars of stone to survive fire or flood. After the flood, Pythagoras found one stone and Hermes the other. Ham, Noah's son, revived the practice of masonry. Nimrod, Ham's son, sent masons to Assyria and gave them charges which, declares the Cooke manuscript, survive, just as those given by Euclid have survived.

The Cooke author then repeats the story of Euclid in much the same way as Regius, but with more biblical references and circumstantial information about Egypt. He describes how stonemasonry came to Europe. He states that a King was elected in France called Charles II, who loved masons, and gave them charges which were still in use in France. Shortly afterwards, 'Saint Ad Habelle' came to England and converted St Alban to christianity. Alban also gave charges to the masons and 'ordained convenient wages to pay for their travail'. Cooke then gives a slightly different version of the Athelstan story. He states that Athelstan's youngest son himself became proficient in masonry, and gave the masons ordinances. He declared that they should have reasonable pay, and purchased a charter from the King that the masons might hold an assembly at whatever time they thought reasonable. Cooke then repeats the story of Athelstan's grant in the same terms as Regius, and repeats the various ordinances. The order of the articles is slightly different, and some of the more general articles in Regius are omitted. The effect of the rearrangement is to give greater prominence to the masons' assembly, and Cooke concludes by stressing that any mason who failed to attend the assembly would be arrested by the sheriff and cast into prison. None of the supplementary material from Mirk or 'Urbanitatis' is repeated in Cooke.

In taking the legendary history of stonemasonry back to Genesis, the Cooke author gives references to Bede,

Isidore and other authorities, but as Douglas Knoop and Douglas Hamer have pointed out these are mostly spurious. For example, it is stated that Pythagoras wrote the Polychronicon, whereas this popular medieval historical encyclopaedia was written by the Chester monk Ralph Higden, who died in 1361, and translated into English by John Trevisa in about 1387. It has been argued that Cooke represents an older version of the text than Regius, because it omits some of the articles and because of textual variants seventeenth-century manuscripts of the Old Charges. To use texts which are more than two hundred years older to reach conclusions about the relationship of two medieval texts seems extremely hazardous. The general sense of the order of Cooke is that it is a development of a text whose contents were close to that in Regius. The grafting of a more extended legendary history onto the beginning of the Regius text would explain why Cooke repeats the story of Athelstan. Moreover, Cooke refers to existing books of the charges of Euclid, apparently similar to Regius, which takes the legendary history back only to Euclid. However, regardless of the relationship between the two texts, the essential point is that, when we strip away the additions from Mirk and 'Urbanitatis' in Regius, we are left with two very similar texts, both dating from the first quarter of the fifteenth century, which consist of legendary histories of the origins of stonemasonry together with a series of ordinances supposedly granted by Athelstan.

In further investigating Regius and Cooke, the starting point remains the mass of information about medieval stonemasons assembled by the formidable trio of Sheffield scholars, Douglas Knoop, Douglas Hamer and Gwilym Jones, who produced the definitive edition of these texts. Knoop and Hamer argued that, while Regius and Cooke reflect pride in the stonemason's craft, they were not produced by masons: 'they were written and composed by clerks; but they were composed in large parts of materials current among masons, of customs and perhaps traditions, which had been orally transmitted from generation to generation, much as manorial customs were commonly transmitted before it became convenient or necessary to set them down in writing'. They suggested that, since the Regius manuscript was at the Augustinian priory of Llanthony in Gloucestershire at the Dissolution, it was composed there.

These comments reflect an assumption that literate culture in the fifteenth century was clerical and that artisan access to it was limited. But this is oversimplistic. Business and government relied on documents and lay people needed to understand what was in them. Already in the early fourteenth century, some peasants on the manor of Halesowen in Worcestershire were literate and assisted in the compilation of manorial records. The rebels in 1381 used letters to communicate with each other and by 1430 Lollard craftsmen in Dorset and Wiltshire were distributing written criticisms of the church. Society at large became increasingly literate

during the fifteenth century, a process accelerated by the greater use of English in official documents. This is reflected in the appearance of a body of literature which, if not actually produced by artisans and craftsmen, shows contact with and sympathy for them. This material provides an important textual context for Regius and Cooke.

The American scholar Linne Mooney has recently discovered a treatise in English on the seven liberal arts dating from the late fifteenth century. In describing each of the arts, the treatise gives practical illustrations of their value. Under arithmetic, examples are given of simple mathematical operations, such as how to calculate a square root. Geometry is discussed at great length, with illustrations, apparently drawn from digests of Euclid, of how to measure the length of a field, the depth of a well or the height of a steeple. The importance of geometry in making buildings to protect man from heat and cold and the great craft involved in such operations as erecting steeples was stressed. At the end, the treatise, drawing on the earlier work of Hugh of St Victor, states that the seven liberal arts were complemented by seven special sciences which were practical skills of everyday life, such as agriculture, hunting and medicine. In discussing these special sciences, the author attempts to link them to crafts in medieval towns. In this way, in Mooney's words, 'the text expresses a pride in artisanship, the professions and trades that only just falls short of claiming parity with clerical skills'. This is clearly the

milieu in which Regius and Cooke should be placed. Interestingly, like Regius, this text has Augustinian connections, suggesting that the Augustinians were important mediators between clerical and lay literacy.

An even more direct pride in craftsmanship is apparent from another late fifteenth-century text printed by Edmund Wilson in 1988, *The Debate of the Carpenters' Tools*. This is a lively comic debate between the various tools of the carpenter's trade: the saw, the rule, the plane, the compass and so on. A typical exchange is that between the rule stone and the gouge. The rule stone declares that his master will rule the roost; the gouge says the rule stone was not worth an old shoe: 'You have been an apprentice for seven year, but all you have learnt is how to leer'. Wilson suggests that the *Debate of the Carpenter's Tools* was intended for recitation at a guild feast. The most striking feature of the poem is the technical awareness shown of the various carpenters' tools. If the author was not himself actually a carpenter, he had absorbed a great deal of arcane knowledge of the carpenter's craft. The *Debate* is not unique; it has been pointed out that the presumably clerical author of the shipwrights' play of the Building of Noah's Ark in the York mystery cycle also displays similar technical knowledge of the shipwright's craft. In this context, Regius and Cooke appear less unusual. Moreover, it makes it seem less unlikely that the stonemasons themselves played an active part in drawing up the texts in Cooke and Regius.

Guilds were another aspect of this increasing lay literacy. A further major textual context for Regius and Cooke are the returns made by guilds in 1388-9 in response to an inquiry into the nature and property of guilds. More than 450 such returns survive in the National Archives. Most are in Latin or French, but 59 are in English, one of the first times English makes an appearance on such a large scale in the public records. The returns were not necessarily made directly by the guilds themselves. In some cases, guild officials went to Westminster and their returns were compiled from an oral deposition. In others, guilds used local clerical help. However, some of the returns were doubtless compiled directly by the guilds. This is likely to be the case with many of the English returns, which are mostly from guilds in London, Norwich and King's Lynn.

Typical of the 1389 guild returns in English are the ordinances of the carpenters in Norwich. The primary purpose of the carpenters' guild was the maintenance of a candle in honour of the Holy Trinity in Norwich Cathedral. An annual meeting was held to ensure the maintenance of this light and the performance of devotions before it. Services were held for members of the guild at their death. The guild would assist members who became impoverished, if it was not through their own folly. Surprisingly, there are few references to craft regulations in these returns. There is little to distinguish the Norwich carpenters' return from that of the guild of

St Thomas of Canterbury at King's Lynn. This guild had also been established to maintain a light, this time to be placed before a picture of St Thomas in a local church. St Thomas's Guild also offered benefits to its members, and if any member became poor through loss at sea, fire or any other act of God, the guild undertook to assist them. The lack of craft content in the 1389 returns is particularly apparent in the return of the fraternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary established by the stonemasons of Lincoln in 1389. Again, this returns concentrates on religious observance and mutual benefits for the members of the guild. The only explicit reference to working stonemasons is a regulation that all stonemasons belonging to the fraternity should give forty pence every time they took an apprentice. Likewise, the stonemasons in Norwich had established a fraternity but its main function was again the maintenance of altar candles.

For historians of the generation of Knoop and Jones, the stonemasons' fraternities at Lincoln and Norwich were not true craft guilds but religious fraternities, but recent scholarship has stressed that such firm distinctions were not made in the medieval town. Although various fraternities, fellowships, crafts and mysteries (all terms used in medieval documents) were an all-pervading feature of medieval town life, there was no rigid legal categorisation of them – they were loose and flexible organisations. It was from religious associations of this kind that the more trade-oriented fraternities emerged. In London, for example, a fraternity at the church of All

Hallows Bread Street was founded by a mercer and a salter. Most subsequent bequests came from salters. Eventually, Salters' Hall was built on land owned by the fraternity and the chapel of the guild became known as the Salters' Chapel. A similar process occurred in York, where during the fifteenth century the fraternity of St John the Baptist became associated with the tailors and the guild of Holy Trinity in Fossgate with the mercers.

The chief driving force in the way in which these fraternities with primarily religious and social functions assumed trade responsibilities was the increasing requirement from the late fourteenth century imposed by royal and civic ordinances for individual crafts to undertake trade regulation. Because the emergence of these guilds was an ad hoc solution to immediate legislative requirements, trade regulation was carried on in a very haphazard fashion. Even more importantly, where such regulation was not required, guilds might not acquire trade regulation functions. Professor Barrie Dobson has recently observed of Durham that 'one is left with the overwhelming impression that, had it not been for the need to impose a procession and sequence of plays on the crafts of the city at their own expense, there would have been no formal guild regulations at all'. In smaller towns such as Grimsby, craft guilds did indeed fail to develop. For historians of the generations of Knoop and Jones, the paucity of references to craft guilds of masons was puzzling, but there is nothing particularly surprising in the available information about masons'

guilds – they are much the same as for many other crafts of similar size and status.

A major driving force behind the assumption of trade regulation responsibilities by various fraternities from the 1360s onwards was the impact of labour legislation. The Black Death had created a labour shortage and this resulted in legislation from 1351 to control wages and regulate terms of service. Between 1351 and 1430 more than a third of the parliaments passed legislation relating to labour. Much of this consisted of attempts to update increasingly elaborate tariffs of wages. The enforcement of this legislation became the responsibility of the justices of the peace. The building trades were a particular problem. The bulk of the surviving prosecutions under the labour legislation concerned carpenters and masons, and a number of the statutes specifically denounce the taking of excessive wages by these trades. Sarah Rees Jones has forcefully argued that increasing urban resentment of the powers of the JPs led to an enactment in 1363 stating that craftsman were to join a single trade and that they were to be regulated by members of their crafts.. She suggests that this gave a major impetus to the assumption of regulatory powers by crafts. Jones argues that the emergence of guilds as regulatory authorities fostered the development of oligarchies within the trade. This led to attempts in many trades by journeymen to establish their own guilds, resulting in conflicts which frequently became violent. In 1387, a group of journeymen tailors violently threatened

other tailors because they would not join a guild of journeymen tailors they had established at Coventry in opposition to the main tailors' guild.

It is in these contexts that we need to interpret the Regius and Cooke manuscripts. There is one feature of Regius and Cooke which is particularly surprising. Other than the vague threat that sheriffs would seize those who did not attend the assembly, no penalties for failure to observe Athelstan's ordinances are specified. In other guild regulations, elaborate penalties are a prominent feature. For example, in ordinances established for carpenters and masons working for the King at Calais in the reign of Edward IV, breaches are punished by loss of wages, which were to be paid into a common chest, the 'box of St John'. Likewise, those who breached the rules of the mason's fraternity at Lincoln also paid fines to the fraternity. Regius and Cooke rely instead on general injunctions, with an appeal to history, apart from the threat of prison for those not attending the assembly. While many of the provisions of Regius and Cooke can be paralleled in ordinances from other trades, they do not include any of the detailed provision about, for example, working hours or reuse of building materials which can be found in other masons ordinances, such as those from Calais or York. The only substantive organisational focus of Cooke and Regius is the masons' assembly.

In the 1425 parliament, the commons presented a petition complaining that the annual congregations and

confederacies made by the masons in their general chapters and assemblies were publicly violating and undermining the statutes of labourers. They asked the King and Lords to ordain that the holding and gathering of such chapters should be utterly forbidden and judged a felony, and asked that the justices of the peace should be given authority to enquire into these chapters and assemblies. The King replied that such chapters and congregations should not be held, and those who convene such chapters should be adjudged felons. Any masons who go to such congregations should be imprisoned without fine or ransom at the king's will. A statute to this effect was duly enacted.

Thus, at about the time that Regius and Cooke were being held, masons were holding assemblies to try and ensure they got higher wages. It seems perverse not to identify these assemblies with those described in Regius and Cooke, but scholars have been reluctant to do so. Salzmann objected that nobody had found evidence of a prosecution under this legislation, but enforcement of the statute was the responsibility of the justices of the peace and only a few peace rolls survive from this period. Knoop and Jones were tempted to identify the assemblies of Cooke and Regius with those of the legislation, but hesitated because Regius and Cooke declare that sheriffs and aldermen attended these assemblies. However if the texts of Regius and Cooke were compiled to authorise the holding of such assemblies, then obviously it would

be in their interests to claim that they had in the past been sanctioned by the presence of royal officials.

Another reason for the hesitation of Knoop and Jones in making this identification was the suggestion that master masons attended the assemblies described in Regius and Cooke, but again we have no evidence that they did. All Regius and Cooke required was that masters should attend, but given that we know that noone was ever arrested for not attending such an assembly this was an empty threat. These injunctions instead perhaps indicate that the assemblies which produced Regius and Cooke wanted greater control over the masters. There are hints that an oligarchy was emerging among masons similar to that in other crafts. The 1351 statute had awarded the 'mason of free stone' higher wages than other masons. It is perhaps this increasing division which had led to the disputes between the mason hewers and mason setters which led to the London ordinances of 1356.

Increasingly in building contracts and elsewhere the freemason appears as a small-scale capitalist entrepreneur. Regius and Cooke react against this trend not only by making demands on such issues as pay, holidays and notice of dismissal, but also by using the legendary history to demonstrate that all masons were equal and the craft of noble origin. The picture given in Regius and Cooke of masons working together as equal fellows are, as Cooper has shown, intended to portray a community of workers, but this community may already have vanished at the time that the texts were composed.

Even small details of the legendary history may have been affected by changes in the masons' trade. The appearance of the French King Charles perhaps reflects the need to show that the ordinances applied also to masons working in France on projects like those at Calais. The inclusion of extracts from Mirk and 'Urbanitatis' in Regius are evidently attempts to demonstrate the respectability of these lower grade masons. The appeal to the past was a common claim of journeymen's guilds. One journeyman's gild in York claimed to have existed for three hundred years, and another in Coventry said that it had existed from time immemorial. The appeal to Athelstan was simply an attempt to give concrete expression to this, comparable to many other medieval appeals to the past, whether by the monasteries which forged charters by Athelstan and other Anglo-Saxon kings or the peasants who in the 1370s purchased exemplifications from Domesday Book to show that they were free.

If we are to follow David Wallace's advice and seek that moment of precarious historicity for the texts of Regius and Cooke, it lies in that statute of 1425. This makes a further and final important point about the study of freemasonry and literature. It is dangerous to make hard and fast distinctions between literary texts and historical documents. Because they are in middle English and one is in verse, Regius and Cooke have been regarded as primarily literature, yet the key to understanding them lies in the petition of 1425, preserved in the rolls of

parliament, and in labour legislation. We know very little about the enforcement of this labour legislation in the fifteenth century, but although few justices of the peace records survive, there is information about enforcement of labour legislation dispersed through other legal records such as the gaol delivery records and the king's bench rolls. If we wish to explore further the context of Regius and Cooke, the next stage lies in these little studied and unregarded legal records.

Men and Women in the Guild returns of 1389

Paper at the conference organised by the Centre for Research into Freemasonry and the Centre for Gender Studies in Europe, 'Lodges, Chapters and Orders: Fraternal Organisations and the Shaping of Gender Roles in Europe, 1300-2000', July 2002

In his 1891 book, *Two Thousand Years of Guild Life*, the Rev. J. Malet Lambert described medieval guilds as follows: 'They were very largely the Chambers of Commerce, the Friendly Societies, the Trades Unions, the Freemasonry, and in some degree the Joint Stock Companies, of the times when the merchant lived in his warehouse, which was also his factory as well as his shop...'. Parallels such as these have frequently been unhelpful in discussion of medieval guilds, but Lambert's quotation nevertheless vividly encapsulates the profound influence of the guild on the concept and structure of fraternal organisations up to the present day.

The fundamental principle of a voluntary association contributing to a common fund for objects of mutual and charitable benefit was first established on a large scale by the guilds. The guilds also elaborated many of the characteristic features of later fraternal organisations. The most important contribution of the guild was the concept that a voluntary organisation could be a

surrogate family, with fellow members becoming brothers and sisters, but the guilds also pioneered many other fundamental features of fraternal organisations, such as the members' feast as a central social activity; the holding of regular business meetings of the membership; the election of officers to hold funds and property and to discipline the members; the use of processions as a chief expression of the organisation's public face; the administration of oaths to new members and officers; and the use of special clothing to denote membership. Guilds also pioneered much of the vocabulary taken over by later fraternal bodies, most familiarly the names used for officers, such as master, wardens, deacon, and steward.

The quotation from Lambert reflects the common assumption that medieval guilds were fundamentally organisations for the control of particular trades. In fact, guild was one of a wide range of terms used in the middle ages to describe charitable and social associations, including fraternity, society, company, mystery and craft. The majority of these associations were not concerned with trade at all, and as Susan Reynolds has pointed out, 'Just because words like guild, fraternity and society were used so widely, the associations they describe could be very various. Historians have themselves deepened their own confusion by their odd convention of using the word guild in preference to all the others, and then assuming that guilds were basically trade associations'.

The most widespread form of guild in the later middle ages was a voluntary association, formed in honour of a particular saint and linked to a local church, to commemorate the saint and to provide communal prayers for living and dead members. Members of the association might also enjoy various other benefits or jointly contribute to other objects of wider utility. Fraternities of this kind were characteristic of both town and countryside; they were one of the fundamental social units of later medieval life, as all pervasive as the county, parish or manor.

As these religious fraternities developed, they assumed extra functions. This is how the trade guilds were born. Professor Caroline Barron has mapped the emergence of the London trade guilds from such religious associations. For example, a fraternity at the church of All Hallows Bread Street is recorded to have received bequests from a mercer and a salter in 1349. Most subsequent bequests were from salters. Eventually, Salters' Hall was built on land owned by the fraternity, and the chapel of the guild became known as Salters' Chapel. The emergence of trade guilds from religious fraternities was expedited by the requirement of the civic authorities for the appointment of officers to enforce trade regulations. A similar process can be seen in York, where during the fifteenth century the fraternity of St John the Baptist became associated with the tailors and the guild of Holy Trinity in Fossgate with the mercers.

In a number of towns, religious fraternities also assumed a civic role. In the thirteenth century, the guild merchant had been the chief means by which burgesses undertook corporate activities and was the effective government of many towns. The guild merchant declined in the fourteenth century, and religious fraternities emerged in a number of places as a mechanism to control the election of local officials and to minimise factional conflict. In Westminster, the guild of the Assumption became a surrogate town council, while in Norwich, under the terms of a 1452 agreement, all aldermen were obliged to join the Guild of St George. Likewise, in the small town of Windsor, the election of the mayor and bailiffs was controlled by the Holy Trinity .

In 1388, the large number of such fraternities prompted what might be described as a secret societies scare. At the parliament which met at Cambridge in September and October 1388, the Commons presented a series of demands to improve the condition of the realm. Their first request was that the badges and liveries, such as distinctive hoods, distributed by the king and other great lords to their followers, should be abolished. Secondly, the Commons asked that 'all guilds, fraternities and their common chests shall be abolished...saving always chantries ordained in ancient times for the souls of their founders'. The Commons were concerned that fraternities with a common livery were being used as a means of promoting false lawsuits and riotous attacks. They stressed that they were not hostile to fraternities

established for genuine religious purposes, but wanted to ensure that fraternities were not used as a cover for illegal activities. Similar worries about liveries and the promotion of false lawsuits had been expressed by the Commons before, but the focus on fraternities was new.

Although the King did not agree to the abolition of the guilds, on 1 November 1388, sheriffs throughout England were ordered to make two proclamations. In the first, the masters and wardens of guilds and brotherhoods were ordered to make within three months written returns summarising the following information: the manner of the guild's formation; the manner and form of all oaths, gatherings, feasts and meetings of the brothers and sisters; the liberties, privileges, ordinances and customs of the guild; and finally, details of all the lands and property held by the guild. A second proclamation ordered masters, wardens and surveyors of crafts to bring any royal grants held by them into chancery for inspection.

The legacy of these proclamations is a remarkable series of returns made at the beginning of 1389 giving details of the organisation of approximately 500 guilds. The guild returns of 1389 are among the most important sources for the study of guilds in medieval England. Without them, we should be largely ignorant of the activities of fraternities before 1450. For many of the guilds represented in these returns, very little other information survives prior to their dissolution in 1547. The returns

are particularly informative about guilds in small towns and rural parishes, for which other sources can be very sparse. However, these 500 returns cover only a small proportion of the guilds active in 1389. The majority of the surviving returns are from East Anglia and Lincolnshire, with 289, over 55%, from Norfolk and Lincolnshire. While there are further substantial groups of returns from Cambridgeshire, London and Suffolk, for many counties, such as Kent, Dorset and Lancashire, just one return survives.

The skewed geographical distribution of the surviving returns reflects a number of factors. The returns are mainly preserved in a chaotic artificial class in the Public Record Office, known as the Chancery Miscellanea, and some returns may have strayed or been lost. The discovery by Professor Caroline Barron of four returns from London among the manuscripts of Richard Rawlinson in the Bodleian Library confirms that some returns have been extracted from the public records over the years, and further returns may be lying unidentified elsewhere. However, it is also likely that, for many of the other counties under-represented in the surviving returns, returns were simply not made. Just as the survival of rolls of justices of the peace and other local judicial records is related to movements of the court of king's bench, so the pattern of the survival of the guild returns may reflect a concentration by the chancery or another agency on those counties for which the largest number of returns survive. The vast majority of the surviving returns (368) are in

Latin, with another 57 in French. Particularly interesting, however, are the 59 returns in English, one of the earliest occasions on which English makes an appearance on such a large scale in the national archives.

To give a flavour of the returns, I have included in my abstract a translation of a return in Latin for a fraternity in Dronfield in Derbyshire, just south of Sheffield. It is described as a certain guild or fraternity in honour of St Mary in the parish church of Dronfield for the maintenance of a light, chapel and two chaplains there. The return is made in the name of the aldermen and keepers of the fraternity. It begins by describing the circumstances of the foundation of the guild in 1349, the year of the Black Death. It emphasises that the purpose of the foundation was not only to honour the Virgin, but also to offer prayers for the health of the King and Queen, the peace and tranquility of the realm, and for all living brothers and sisters and all past benefactors of the guild. Such a formulation, of course, helped emphasise the loyal and peaceable intentions of the fraternity.

The return then gives details of the ordinances of the guild. It is first stated that all the brothers and sisters should swear to make every reasonable effort to support the maintenance of the chapel and services. But the function of the fraternity went beyond this immediate pious intent. The most characteristic feature of all the religious fraternities was the provision of funeral benefits. The Dronfield guild provided that on the day of

his burial each brother should have around him 12 candles and each sister 6 candles. In memory of the dead brother or sister, all members of the guild would give a pauper a halfpenny on the day of his burial. The benefits of membership were not only available after death, however. It was ordained that if any brother or sister became impoverished through no fault of their own and could not work, they should have a halfpenny a day from the funds of the guild or should live with another brother or sister.

Litigation in fourteenth-century England was expensive and ineffective, and arbitration was preferred as an initial means of settling disputes. The Dronfield fraternity provided a framework for this, by ordaining that no brother or sister would prosecute another member of the guild without first having placed their case before the alderman or another brother of the guild. This was dangerously close to the kind of interference with the judicial process which had caused concern in parliament, and the return stressed that the brothers and sisters had agreed this 'without swearing or corporal oath'. The Dronfield fraternity held an annual meeting. The return stresses that, when the brothers and sisters attended this meeting, they wore their own clothing, apparently a response to parliament's concern about liveries. At this meeting, all the brothers and sisters examined the state of the guild, heard the accounts, and appointed aldermen. Anyone of good and honest reputation who wished to become a brother or sister could do so, subject to the

approval of the aldermen and one member of the fraternity. The return concludes with a list of the lands, rents and reversions belonging to the fraternity.

The fundamental characteristics of this Dronfield example are repeated throughout the returns, and the family resemblance is evident even for fraternities from larger cities such as Lincoln. This can be seen from the return, again in Latin, of the fraternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary established by the masons of Lincoln. The return is made in the name of the graceman, a local term used for masters of guilds. It states that the fraternity was established by the direction and advice of the masons in the year 1313. Although the return incorporates details of practices adopted later than 1313, it is nevertheless of interest as one of the earliest descriptions from England of an organisation associated with working stonemasons.

The ordinances state that the brothers and sisters of the guild should meet together under the penalty of a pound of wax, and take the guild's candle to the appointed church, where it would burn on all feast days of the year. As at Dronfield, the provision of funeral benefits was a central concern. When any member died in the city, all members assembled with four candles, which were to be lit at mass where the body was interred. At the same time, bread was given to the poor in honour of the deceased, with the graceman providing one penny from the guild funds and each of the wardens and members a halfpenny. Should a brother or sister die outside the city,

the guild would commemorate their passing in the same way. More prestigious treatment could be procured by making a bequest to the guild: for a bequest of two shillings, a mass would be said annually; for four shillings, two masses, and so on. In the event of a brother or sister going on pilgrimage abroad, the pilgrim was seen off from the city gates by the guild, and received a halfpenny from each member of the guild. On return, they received a hero's welcome at the city gates, and were conducted to the cathedral 'with joy and honour'.

Like the Dronfield fraternity, the masons' guild at Lincoln assisted impoverished members, although the amount offered was modest, just sixpence a year for a period of up to three years, to be repaid when the member's circumstances improved. Again as at Dronfield, the fraternity provided its members with protection against litigation. Brothers or sisters who began litigation against each other while the guild was still trying to arbitrate between them were fined. It was also stipulated that, if any brother or sister was arrested for any reason, except theft or murder, then the brethren would come to his aid and assist him as brethren should do (the exclusion for theft and murder again suggests that the author of the return was conscious of parliament's anxieties about false lawsuits).

The members of the guild met together to manage its affairs annually on the day after Easter, at a gathering known as a morning speech. Anyone who failed to attend

the morning speech was fined half a pound of wax. There were also fines for those who refused the office of graceman, warden or deacon. The fraternal feast, held on the day of the procession with the candle, was the major social occasion of the fraternity, and it was stipulated that the fraternity would then offer a good meal of meat or fish with bread and mead to as many poor persons as there were brothers and sisters in the guild.

To support these activities, careful management of guild funds was required, and a number of the ordinances are concerned with finance. On entering the guild, every brother or sister paid four shillings or one quarter of barley, and also gave four pence, one to the deacon, one to the clerk, and two to the funds for the feast. Each brother was required to pay one farthing a week during the year. There were strict regulations about not retaining any guild property. Finally, all the masons who were members of the guild agreed that they would give forty pence towards the cost of the candle each time they took an apprentice. This is the only explicitly recorded link between the fraternity and the craft of masonry. The focus of the Lincoln masons' guild as presented in the 1389 return was on religious, social and mutual benefits. However, it was from precisely this kind of fraternity that craft guilds would emerge, a process that can be seen at Lincoln from the inclusion in the ordinances of the Tylers' guild that all tylers working in the city should join the guild and that no brother should do anything underhand to wrong another in working his craft.

These returns cast many interesting sidelights on fourteenth century English life, but I should like here briefly to focus on just one feature. The Dronfield return describes its members as brothers and sisters. Although women received only half the number of funeral candles awarded to men, the return otherwise makes no distinction between the male and female members of the guild. It is explicitly stated that both the men and women must attend the annual meeting of the fraternity, suggesting that they had equal roles in its government. A similar feature is apparent in the Lincoln masons' guild, where women appear to enjoy complete equality with men. The appearance of brothers and sisters apparently on a more or less equal footing is a striking feature of the 1389 returns. Nearly 80% of the surviving returns refer specifically to women as members.

This forms a striking contrast to many other medieval organisations, including craft guilds, which were generally closed to women. Occasionally the wives of some members of craft guilds became members of the guild, and retained their membership after the deaths of their husbands, but they were a small minority. Although a few womens' craft guilds are found in Rouen, Paris and Cologne, in medieval Europe even skilled women workers, such as the London silkweavers, generally did not organise craft guilds. If the information about religious fraternities in the 1389 returns is accepted at face value, it would appear that they were one of the few medieval social institutions to which wives, single

women and widows could belong on equal terms with men.

In examining more closely the information about men and women in the 1389 returns, it is essential first to consider how these texts were created. One thing which is certain is that they are generally not direct transcripts by guild officials of their ordinances. Two returns survive for fraternities in Yarborough in Lincolnshire, the fraternity of Corpus Christi formed in 1358 and the fraternity of St Peter in 1362. The return for the Corpus Christi guild is interesting because it emphasises that men and women were involved in the discussions which led to the first establishment of the guild. It also explicitly states that both brothers and sisters would attend the annual meeting on the feast of Corpus Christi, and would elect a supervisor of the guild. Interestingly, however, it states that the supervisor would manage the goods and chattels of the guild, by advice of the brothers (thus implying that the women were excluded from the management of the guild). The return of St Peter's guild is made in the name of a different person. However, it is written in exactly the same hand as that for the Corpus Christi guild and exactly the same wording is used. One return was simply copied from the other, with only the details of the guild and guild official changed. Such a coincidence between the returns from a single place is perhaps not surprising, and can be explained by the use of a local attorney to make the returns. However, a number of other Lincolnshire returns make use of the

form of words found in Yarborough. These include the returns for the guild of the Virgin Mary at Fotherby, the three guilds at Falstow and the Corpus Christi guild at Alvingham. There is hardly any discernable difference between these six returns.

The process by which the guild returns were produced has recently been brilliantly illuminated by Jan Gerchow in a remarkable pioneering study which has important implications for the use of all medieval archival materials. Gerchow points out that copying of the sort found in this Lincolnshire example is a common feature of all the returns. He describes other examples in Cambridgeshire, Suffolk, Norfolk and Lincolnshire. Moreover, even where there is no direct copying, many of the returns show similarities in form, structure and wording. Gerchow argues that the process by which the returns were created was a complex one. He suggests that one group of returns were prepared by the chancery clerks at Westminster following interviews with guild officials. In other cases, the returns were prepared by what Gerchow calls 'local chanceries', which were perhaps offices associated with such local officials as the sheriff. These local returns also generally incorporate the results of an interview with guild officials.

The returns bear many traces of this process of interrogation. Key additional information, such as that a guild has no lands, is often added in another hand at the end of the return, suggesting that the information was

inserted at the end of the process. Working notes of names of members or officers are hastily added to the returns. The process by which the returns were prepared was probably not unusual: a similar procedure was apparently used in preparing indictments and inquisitions, with local juries being interviewed and their information being worked up into a formal record by clerks attached to the court. It is tempting in this context to suggest that the returns in English are closer to the original guild ordinances than those in Latin or French, but again similarities in wording and form can be found in the English returns - the returns from King's Lynn, for example, suggest that the clerks preparing them took a particular interest in penalties for betraying the secrets of the guild. It seems that the clerk making the record of the inquisition preferred to use English because it was easier in this way to describe the complex ordinances of the guild than prepare a formal Latin or French version of them.

Gerchow's analysis has profound implications for interpretation of the returns. The returns emerge as mostly formal records of interviews, not direct statements by guild officials. Thus, in the case of the return of the Lincoln masons, what we have is not the guild ordinances as established in 1313, but the official record of an inquiry into certain (but not all) aspects of the guild in 1389. The information in the 1389 returns has been filtered through a succession of bureaucratic processes. In this context, doubts may be felt as to

whether any reliance can be placed on the information in the returns about the roles of men and women in the guilds.

The group of copied Lincolnshire returns from Yarbrough, Fotherby and elsewhere illustrate the dangers of assuming from joint references to brothers and sisters that men and women were on an equal footing within a guild. These returns state that both brothers and sisters attended the annual meeting of the guild, but the use of common formulae makes it impossible to determine whether this actually happened, or on what basis. Conversely, failure to refer to women may not necessarily indicate that they were excluded from a guild, but (as in the case of Chesterfield in Derbyshire where the surviving returns do not mention women) may simply reflect local clerical practice. In this context, a simple count of the number of returns which mention women is unsatisfactory as a guide to the extent of their involvement in guilds. It is necessary to concentrate on details which are explicitly gendered, as at Dronfield, where the funeral provision for men and women was different.

In the return for the Guild of the Blessed Virgin Mary at Baston in Lincolnshire, members are consistently referred to as brothers, and its status as a male order is confirmed by the statement that, when a brother dies, the fraternity would elect a 'worthy man' to replace him. By contrast, in the guild of St John the Baptist at Baston, the

active involvement of women in the guild is confirmed by the stipulation that on St John the Baptist's day, all the sisters of the fraternity should come to dance with each other on the pain of a fine. The sisters were also specifically required to attend vespers and matins on the eve of St John the Baptist and also on the day of their dance, carrying lights in their hand. In Stamford, the brothers and sisters of the guild of St Martin supported a chaplain and a light in honour of the saint, and met together on the feast of St Martin. By an ancient custom, the fraternity baited a bull in the town, which was then sold to the benefit of the fraternity. The return says that the organisation of this 'bull running' was a responsibility of the brethren, and this again apparently indicates a clear division of responsibility between the brothers and sisters.

In other cases, the involvement of women in the fraternity is apparent in a more prosaic way, where rates of subscription and benefit take into account marital status. Thus, for the guild of Saints Fabian and Sebastian in London, it was stipulated that the wife of brother could join the guild without extra payment on joining, but that they should both pay the quarterly subscription, while a single woman was to pay the same amounts as a man. Similar elaborate tariffs are evident in a number of other guilds. In other cases, active women's membership is apparent from the inclusion of disciplinary clauses specifically concerning women. The occasional notes in

the returns of membership of guilds also confirm the involvement of women.

However, it is over-optimistic to assume from the 1389 evidence that women were members of the fraternities on equal terms with men. Although of course none of the guild officials named in the returns were women, the argument that fraternities were particularly receptive to women has depended on the specific statement of many returns that both brothers and sisters attended meetings of the fraternity where business was transacted and officials elected. If the returns are read as direct transcripts of guild ordinances, this would be a reasonable conclusion. However, vague formulaic statements by chancery and other clerks that the brothers and sisters met together are less convincing - it is necessary to know how such meetings worked.

In a substantial number of cases, women are specifically excluded from the running of the guild, and, since in these cases a deliberate distinction is drawn, these statements are probably more reliable indications of practice than more generalised declarations. Although the Guild of the Resurrection at Lincoln was founded by 'thirteen brothers and sisters', and men and women paid equal subscriptions, only the men were entitled to attend the morning speech, and the brothers elected the officials of the guild, who were men. Similarly, in the guild of Garlickhithe in London, attendance at the quarterly meetings was restricted to the male members, who

provided the officers. In other cases, although men and women are required to attend business meetings, it is explicitly stated that the officers will be men. These restrictions also occurred in rural fraternities. At Harlaxton in Lincolnshire, only men were elected as officials or took part in arbitration.

A major driving force in the involvement of women in fraternities was financial. Men who joined a fraternity to secure spiritual benefits wanted their families to enjoy these as well. In order to ensure the guild funds were not depleted, it was necessary for the women to make a contribution. When men died, widows wanted to stay involved, and provision had to be made for single women. There are many remnants of this process evident in the returns. The guilds themselves needed to maximise their income; many of the guilds recorded in the returns were very shortlived, and getting sufficient funds to maintain the work of the guild was a problem.

However, this was not sufficient to ensure the women members full equality. A sense of gendered hierarchy is frequently apparent. In the procession organised by the guild of St Helen at Beverley, the sisters and the brothers marched separately. A similar sense of hierarchy was probably also a feature of the fraternity feasts, closely linked to the business meetings of the guilds. At Stratford-upon-Avon, the guild of the Holy Cross organised a feast in Easter week. The return describing the feast gives a sense of its ritualised character. Before

the feast was begun, elaborate prayers were held. There followed a ceremony in which ale was given to the poor. The men and the women both brought tankards to carry the ale, but there are separate regulations for each, suggesting that their role was distinguished in some way. Moreover, only the women were fined for failing to bring a tankard, suggesting their role in the ceremony was more prominent.

A characteristic of the medieval town was a sense of hierarchy imposed through ritual and ceremony, and this was doubtless also a feature of the fraternal feast. Gervase Rosser has pointed out how the structure of a fraternal feast could be very elaborate. At the Lincoln fraternity of the Assumption, three barrels of ale were opened: at the opening of the first the guild's ordinances were read; at the second, intercession was offered for the dead; and at the third, the Virgin was appealed to. However, it is not certain that men and women played the same part in these rituals. Charles Phythian Adams noted that at Coventry in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, it was unusual for women to be present at guild banquets. Most of the statements in the 1389 returns about fraternal feasts are again very formulaic, as in the statement in the return for a guild at Coningsby in Lincolnshire that the brothers and sisters meet annually in a certain honest place and there eat and drink and their own cost, and make ordinances and disposition for the guild. Without knowing the seating arrangements, we

cannot be sure that men and women played an equal part in these feasts.

The 1389 returns do indeed show that women played an active role in many guilds, a conclusion confirmed in the fifteenth century by accounts and wills. However, the formulaic character of many of the returns makes it unsafe to assume that women enjoyed an equality of membership with men, and there are many indications that the rights of women members were restricted. This is particularly evident in the role of the guild in controlling the position of women in public space. The guild provided, particularly through processions, a means by which women appeared in the public arena in the medieval town. However, it did so in a way which reinforced existing hierarchies. Thus, the men at Stamford ran the bull-baiting, while the women at Baston danced.

It is a paradox which runs through the history of fraternal organisations that while, on the one hand, they have often promoted new forms of social interaction, on the other they have frequently reinforced existing hierarchies. It seems, from the 1389 returns, that the medieval guilds were no different.

V MASONIC PROCESSIONS

Cross-Domain Searching in Action: Reconstructing Masonic Processions

*Paper to the Museums Association Conference,
Brighton, 6 October 2003, as part of the session
'Artefacts of Fraternal Societies', organised by the
Library and Museum of Freemasonry*



I will begin by showing you a short extract from a video called *Stratford-upon-Avon: A Journey Through Time* produced by a company called Video By Design. It shows the laying of the foundation stone of the new Shakespeare Memorial Theatre at Stratford in July 1929 (there is a mistake in the commentary, but the film caption is correct – the ceremony took place on 2 July 1929).

This remarkable film challenges many of our modern preconceptions of freemasonry. We think of freemasons as members of a secret society who are reluctant to reveal their membership. Yet as recently as 1929 hundreds of freemasons paraded through Stratford-upon-Avon to perform a ceremony which attracted international attention. The ceremony was even broadcast on the radio by the BBC in one of the earliest outside broadcasts. This doesn't seem like a very secret society. In laying the foundation stone, the Pro Grand Master of the Freemasons, Lord Ampthill, was performing a function which we might now associate with royalty, and the freemasons assumed a national ceremonial role. It seems that the role of freemasonry in society was very different seventy five years ago. In investigating this issue further, this exotic ceremony at Stratford provides a good starting point.

The ceremony at Stratford was not a one-off event. One reason why the freemasons were invited to perform this ceremony in 1929 was that the foundation stone of the

original theatre had been laid by the freemasons of Warwickshire in 1877.

A year before the Stratford ceremony, Ampthill laid the foundation stone of the extension of the Regent Street Polytechnic with masonic honours in another event which attracted national press coverage. The President of the Polytechnic and the driving force behind its development at that time was Sir Kynaston Studd. Studd never lost an opportunity to publicise the Polytechnic. He was at that time Lord Mayor of London, and floats from the Polytechnic had dominated his show. Studd was also a prominent freemason. He was Provincial Grand Master of Cambridgeshire, had played an important role in the building of the new Freemasons' Hall in London, and held national office as Junior Grand Warden. Presumably Studd used his influence in freemasonry to arrange this striking masonic ceremony in order to achieve publicity for the Polytechnic. Shortly afterwards, Ampthill again wielded his trowel when he laid the foundation stone of the Lord Mayor Treloar Hospital at Alton in Hampshire.

In performing these ceremonies, Ampthill was following the precedent of many previous Grand Masters and Pro Grand Masters of English freemasonry. One of the most celebrated such events was the laying of the foundation stone of Truro Cathedral by the Prince of Wales as Grand Master in 1880. The Prince performed similar ceremonies for many other buildings ranging from the Indian Institute in Oxford and the central tower of

Peterborough Cathedral to the North Staffordshire Infirmary in Etruria.

The Prince's predecessors as Grand Master were also active in performing these public ceremonies. Here is the programme for the laying of the foundation stone of the Royal Albert Asylum in Lancaster by Lord Zetland as Grand Master in 1868. The invitation to perform such ceremonies came from the society or body responsible for the building, and institutions vied to secure the services of the freemasons to give a good start to their project.

The English Pro Grand Master Lord Carnarvon declared in the 1880s that 'Where the flag goes, there goes freemasonry to consolidate the Empire'. The masonic procession formed part of this process, as can be seen from these photographs of the laying of the foundation stones of the English church in Bulawayo in 1910 and the Zetland Masonic Hall in Hong Kong in 1949.

Friendly societies also held their own separate parades. Here are some photographs taken from two excellent new websites, 'Gathering the Jewels', run by Culturenet Cymru, and Staffordshire Past Track. Like the masons, the Oddfellows and other friendly societies paraded with banners and symbols representing the mythology of their order. Among the most spectacular events were those of the Ancient Order of Foresters, whose members appeared on horses complete in medieval foresters' costume.

These processions were not purely urban phenomena. Club days in local villages included parades which were a highlight of the rural calendar. The bottom right photograph here shows a Foresters club day in Devon.

The masonic and friendly society parades were part of a processional culture which flourished in Britain up to the Second World War. These parades gave vivid expression to local social hierarchies. The American historian of parades Susan Davis has stressed how they were ‘an important, varied and popular mode of communication in nineteenth-century cities... Parades were modes of propaganda, recreation, local celebration, and national commemoration’. In the words of Andy Kroll, parades were ‘a living, breathing, music-playing representation of the social order itself’. This is particularly apparent in temperance parades which spectacularly sought to demonstrate the size, rationality and purity of the temperance movement. Catholic processions in Whit Week, with their child marchers in beautiful white dresses, were designed to stress the respectability of the Catholic population. In Wales, non-conformist churches likewise used processions as vehicles for recreation, propaganda and moral improvement. The women’s movement in the early twentieth century made skilful use of processions to demonstrate the strength and capabilities of women, with Suffragette marches including contingents of women freemasons.

Parades were a form of street theatre, and in researching such events, it is essential to use not only conventional library and archival sources but also film and sound wherever available as well as artefacts such as banners, regalia, badges and sashes. For the historian of parades, resources giving cross-domain access to library, archive and museum collections are indispensable. Some such resources are now becoming available. The larger digitisation projects sponsored by the New Opportunities Fund are very valuable in giving integrated access to materials from a wide range of collections. As can be seen here, the ‘Gathering the Jewels’ project run by Culturenet Cymru gives access to banners, posters, photographs and printed material relating to temperance parades.

The Library and Museum of Freemasonry has recently made available on the internet its catalogue which gives integrated access to its library, archival and museum collections which not only form the richest collection on the history of freemasonry in the world but also, as we have seen, contain important materials relating to other fraternal organisations.

The way in which the Library and Museum’s catalogue draws together books, archives and artefacts opens up new horizons for the historian and is a valuable tool in studying events like parades. I would like to briefly illustrate how this cross-domain searching assists in studying a single such event, and will take as my

example the laying of the foundation stone of the Stratford theatre in 1929.

The library materials relating to the Stratford event also have interest as artefacts. The sumptuously produced programme reflects the way in which the ceremony was promoted as an event of national importance. It was this that caused the controversy mentioned in the commentary to the film we saw earlier. It was felt that the theatre committee had used the freemasons to give a spurious air of national importance to the ceremony in order to impress American donors, despite the fact that the construction of such a large building in a small country town had provoked local protests.

Archival records such as this copy of the order of procession provide a key to interpreting much of the film and photographic evidence. Library and archival materials in fact provide the only record of an essential part of the event, the music, since unfortunately no record of the BBC broadcast survives.

Reports of parades all emphasise their colourful character, and this can now only be recaptured from the surviving artefacts. The most eye-catching feature of all parades were the various banners and standards. You will have noticed the two standards borne in front of Lord Amphill. These were the standards of the United Grand

Lodge. One has the arm of the Grand Lodge itself, and the other the arms of the Grand Master, in this case those of the present Grand Master the Duke of Kent, but in 1929 the arms would have been those of the then Grand Master, the Duke of Connaught. The ceremonial sword is a distinctive feature of masonic processions. The ceremonial sword of United Grand Lodge, used in 1929, supposedly once belonged to King Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden, and helped signify the antiquity of the order and its royal connections.

Another aspect of the ceremony which added to its colourful nature were the costumes. Freemasons wore formalised versions of stonecutters aprons whose symbols represent their rank and status in the organisation. This is a Pro Grand Master's apron of the sort Lord Amphill would have worn in 1929.

Most of the participants in the procession would have worn Master Mason's regalia like this. The formalisation of Masonic costume in itself conveyed many subtle social messages – the original long stonecutter's apron had been abandoned to stress the genteel character of freemasons and their distinction from working stonemasons, and the symbolism of the aprons conveyed the mystic character of the craft.

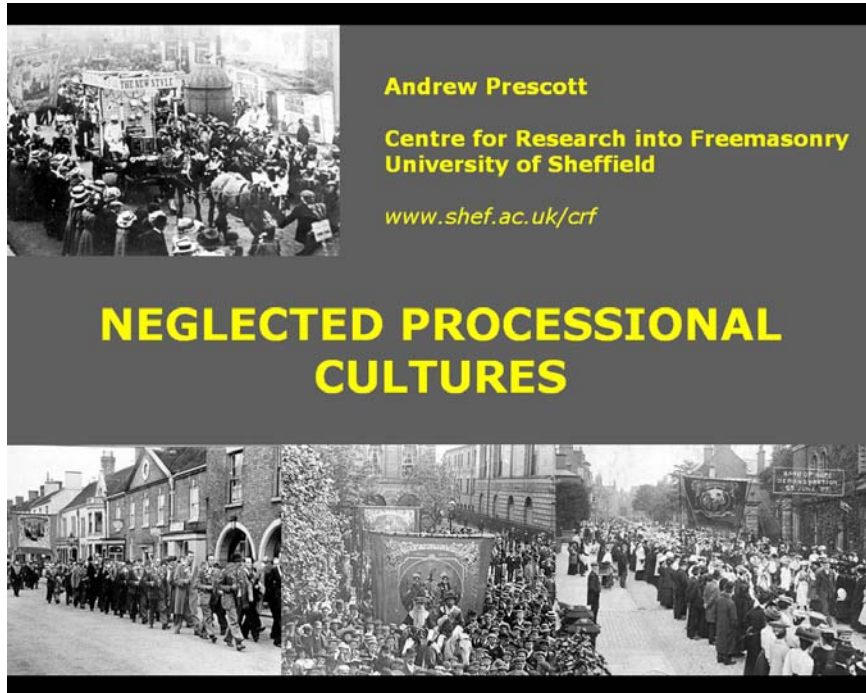
The various jewels worn by masons representing their rank and distinctions also added considerably to the visual impact of the occasion. This is Ampthill's jewel as Pro Grand Master

Among the most imposing objects from the 1929 ceremony were these vessels which held the corn, wine, oil and salt used in the blessings. The cornucopia and ewers which held the corn, wine and oil were purchased by Grand Lodge in 1852, and reflect the increasingly religious ethos of Victorian freemasonry. The container for the salt was purchased in 1888 when this made a belated appearance in the ceremony.

Masonic processions in England ceased sometime before the Second World War. This was also the time at which friendly society processions fizzled out. How far this was due to reasons specific to each organisation or part of a general trend requires further investigation. However, the tradition of the masonic procession survives in Scotland. The Melrose Lodge still holds an annual torchlight procession around the town on St John's Day. Likewise, the Caledonian Lodge of Oddfellows in Newburgh in Fife have an annual torchlight procession in costumes and masks.

Nevertheless, the custom of masonic stonelaying has not been forgotten in England. It was spectacularly revived in 2000 when the Province of Durham financed the removal of an old Masonic hall to Beamish Open Air Museum. The foundation stone was laid with full Masonic honours at the Museum by Alan Davidson the Provincial Grand Master of Durham, continuing the tradition upheld by Lord Ampthill, Edward VII and many other eminent masons.

Neglected Processional Cultures



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NEGLECTED PROCESSIONAL CULTURES

The following presentation was given to the Medieval English Theatre conference, April 2003

I am very honoured to kick off proceedings at this conference to mark the silver jubilee of *Medieval English Theatre*. I am doubly honoured because I am not an

expert in this field. As you will know, I share with Meg and Pam a common interest in the digitisation of medieval manuscripts, but my knowledge of medieval theatre is limited to what I have picked up from occasional conversations with them. Indeed, when I was at Leicester University recently, I met Greg Walker, who expressed surprise that I was speaking at a METH conference. I started explaining to him what I would be talking about, whereupon he suddenly remembered that he had an urgent errand to perform, and rapidly loped off in the opposite direction. I hope I won't elicit the same reaction from you this morning.

Conscious of the shortcomings in my knowledge of medieval theatre, I thought that the least I could do in preparing myself for this talk was to look through the back run of *Medieval English Theatre*. Needless to say, I spent a fascinating day and was intrigued by the way in which the balance of different themes and interests has shifted over twenty five years. In the early issues, as I expected, articles on the practical issues of staging medieval drama predominated. I don't know whether anybody has ever drawn a parallel between the philosophy that METH has promulgated for theatrical performance and the movement for authentic performance of early music, which also took off in the 1970s, but the early issues of METH to my mind have a similar flavour. It was of course these practical concerns which prompted the appearance of articles describing religious processions in Spain, the Low Countries and

elsewhere, and one of the main features of the development of METH has been an increasing interest in these comparisons. The other major development in METH's intellectual agenda, it seems to me, has been a growing interest in the audience: who watched the performances, how access to the performances was controlled, and how the knowledge and expectations of the audience shaped the performance. When these various interests in practical stagecraft, in comparative material, and in audience are fused with discussion of symbolism, as for example in many of the articles in the special number on *Evil on the Medieval Stage*, METH achieves for me its most potent effect and produces a very heady brew. METH has always been profoundly interdisciplinary and its outlook and this certainly has always generated a feeling of intellectual excitement in virtually every issue of the journal.

Above all, I found browsing through these back issues great fun, and that more than anything else seems to have been the reason for METH's success over the past twenty five years. Indeed, I consider that this is one of the most important messages in METH. It has consistently illustrated how academic research is and ought to be enormous fun, in a world where that vital message is easily forgotten. Looking through the old news reports in METH, I found that it was not only the descriptions of the dramatic productions themselves which gave a sense of having entered a world where nothing is quite as it seems. The METH world is one in which pomegranates

can be miraculously transfigured. In Volume 8, there is a note 'It had to happen. Pamela King points out that in our previous issue the celestial pomegranate is descending upside down. We can only apologise that it was the right way up when it was sent to the printers. To get the correct effect, reverse the page, the clouds should be at the top'. The METH world is one where time can have its own meaning. In volume 9, it is noted that 'in METH time we are still in 1987 but in the other world 1988 is halfway through'. Many of these time slips appear to have been due with battling with a recalcitrant, and presumably very early, word processor, which was finally retired to be viewed with awe by information scientists as a relic of primeval computing. I was a little worried about only having given Meg a proper title for this talk a few days ago, but was reassured to see that this appears to be a long-standing tradition of METH conferences. I remain baffled however as to how the highlight of the 1990 METH conference at Westfield College, which seems never to have received any more formal title than 'Extremely Long and Boring Speeches', was the dismantling of an expensive standard lamp in the Senior Common Room.

While flicking through the backnumbers of METH in the British Library, another METH timeslip manifested itself. Flicking through Volume 12, this piece of paper fluttered out. It is a Lancaster University compliments slip signed by Meg, with the following stern note: 'N.B. Volume 11 is not yet published'. Since Volume 11 is now published,

I'm afraid my librarian's instinct made me remove the compliments slip since the bibliographical information on it is out of date, but it's a nice little METH memento. Volume 11 was of course the special number on Evil. Meg's introduction to this volume explains partly why its publication was delayed, but also gives me a justification for the loose and rambling character of what I want to say this morning.

Meg wrote that: 'Having standardised and proofread these papers down to their last comma (and still doubtless missed a few), I settled down to reread them all in their order to write this introduction: to see whether there were common themes, or glaring contradictions, and above all whether this book justifies the implicit claim of its title, to present a comprehensive study of evil on the medieval stage.' The result was that Meg found of course the volume was far from comprehensive. There were large areas that still needed further investigation and many questions which remained unanswered. Meg went on: 'If this introduction reads more like a review than a publisher's blurb, this is why. It does not attempt to introduce or describe all the contributions, but to pick up strands which seem to me of peculiar interest, especially those which invite further investigation...' So, this morning by simply attempting to draw your attention to phenomena which seem to me neglected and on which I would be very keen to hear the thoughts of some experts on drama, I feel I am very much in a METH tradition. I'm slightly worried that I'm straying into what

Pam has called 'New Antiquarianism', but again it seems to me that another strength of METH has been its willingness to draw attention to archives, performances and people who have otherwise been overlooked and ask simply: how does this fit in and is it of wider interest?

METH has explored the relevance of many different media to the study of medieval drama, but one which hasn't been much mentioned, and which might be worth exploring further one day, is radio.

Readers of the *Radio Times* in 1929 wishing to see what programmes they could enjoy on Tuesday 2 July found, among the programmes offered by 2LO London and 5XX Daventry, talks by Mrs E.M. Stephenson on 'An Easy Way of Bottling Fruit', by T. S. Eliot on John Donne, and by Sir Walford Davies on 'Handel at the Harpischord'. There were also various concerts including an organ recital from Southwark Cathedral, a recital of Irish gaelic folk songs and madrigals by the Wireless Singers. The highlight of the day's listening however was a live relay in the afternoon from Stratford-upon-Avon, not, as you might think, of a play, but rather of the ceremony of the laying of the foundation stone of the new Shakespeare Memorial Theatre. An artist's impression of the new theatre dominated the day's listings in the *Radio Times*. Moreover, the *Radio Times* explained that the laying of the foundation stone was to

be undertaken by freemasons 'with full masonic ceremonial'. The actual ceremony would be performed by Lord Ampthill, Pro Grand Master of the United Grand Lodge of England. The United Grand Lodge is governing body of English freemasonry, and the Pro Grand Master is the chief executive of the organisation, having the same relationship to the Grand Master (usually a member of the royal family) as a University Vice-Chancellor to the Chancellor.

The Radio Times helpfully listed for listener at home the order of proceedings at Stratford-upon-Avon:

- The Rt. Hon. the Viscount Burnham C.H., President of the Trustees [of the Theatre] will request the Pro Grand Master to lay the stone;
- The stone will be raised [using a special frame];
- The Pro Grand Master will address the assembly;
- A prayer will be read by the Grand Chaplain, the Rev. A. W. Gough;
- The Pro Grand Master will pass to the stone;
- Papers and coins of the realm will be placed in the cavity beneath the stone;
- The Grand Secretary [of United Grand Lodge], Sir Colville Smith, will read the inscription;
- The Architect, Miss Elizabeth Scott, will present the Pro Grand Master with a ceremonial silver trowel, designed at the Stratford College of Art;
- The Pro Grand Master will spread cement on the lower stone;
- The Upper Stone [which came from Edgehill and weighed over a ton] will then be lowered;
- The Pro Grand Master will adjust the stone by striking it on the four corners; [using an ancient Egyptian maul found in a building of King Zoser who reigned 2,900 BC];
- The stone will be proved;
- The Pro Grand Master will strike the stone three times;
- The United Grand Lodge's Grand Superintendent of Works then presented plans of the new building to the Pro Grand Master for his inspection;
- Various masonic officers then presented to the Pro Grand Master and Grand Chaplain vessels containing corn, wine, and salt;
- The Radio Times then simply says unhelpfully 'Grand Chaplain', but what happened was that the Grand Chaplain performed ceremonies of benediction for the new building using the corn, wine and salt;
- A hymn was sung;
- A speech was then made by the Provincial Grand Master for Warwickshire, Col. W. F. Willey, and the Pro Grand Master responded;

- A further hymn, 'Now Thank We All Our God', was sung, and proceedings were brought to a close with the National Anthem.
- The organist for this occasion was the splendidly named Sir Henry Goss-Custard, who was the first organist of the Anglican cathedral at Liverpool.

It is difficult to imagine all this as a radio broadcast. I suspect it was extremely boring. The *Radio Times* omits one element of this event in its description, presumably because it was something that the radio listener would have missed completely. The ceremony was proceeded by a formal masonic procession, of which this is a picture. Unfortunately, the BBC Sound Archive doesn't contain a recording of this broadcast, although it does have a record of the opening of the theatre three years later. However, a film was taken of the masonic ceremonies, and here is an excerpt from it. In showing the masonic procession, another feature which the film records which would of course have been invisible to the radio listener are the costumes. The freemasons wear aprons based on the working aprons worn by real stonemasons, whose colour and symbolism define their rank within freemasonry.

I'm sure you will agree that this challenges many of our preconceptions about freemasonry. We generally think of freemasonry as a secret society, characterised by funny handshakes and rolled up trouser legs, with dubious

connections with police corruption. The better informed might be aware that freemasons give a lot of money to charity, but generally that is as far as it goes. But a society hardly seems secret when its members are parading around Stratford-upon-Avon, being photographed, filmed and broadcast on the BBC. Moreover, in this instance, freemasonry seems to be identifying itself with a ceremonial event of almost national significance. It is impossible to conceive of such an event taking place today and receiving widespread media coverage without considerable controversy. Yet in 1929, none of the readers to the *Radio Times* seemed to think that an afternoon broadcast of masonic ceremonial was objectionable. There was far greater controversy in the *Radio Times* correspondence columns about what was described as 'that dreadful *Children's Hour*'.

Was the Stratford-upon-Avon ceremony an unusual or rare event? It seems not. Lord Ampthill as Pro Grand Master seems to have been energetic in promoting such public masonic ceremonial. Another large-scale ceremony had been held in 1928 to lay the foundation stone of the extension of Central London Polytechnic, and six months after the Stratford upon Avon event Ampthill repeated the ceremonies when he laid the foundation stone of the Cripples Hospital and College at Alton. Moreover, in performing these ceremonies Ampthill was following a tradition which stretches back to the earliest days of organised freemasonry in this country. The precise origins of freemasonry remain an

area of controversy, and you will all be familiar with the kind of book which, referring extensively to the Templars and Rosslyn Chapel, claim that the esoteric secrets of freemasonry lie concealed in the great pyramid. We can quickly dismiss these as rubbish, and emphasise instead what we do know, which is that modern freemasonry evolved from the medieval masons' guilds in the late seventeenth-early eighteenth century by a process which still remains mysterious.

The British Library possesses two middle English manuscripts, known as the Cooke and Regius manuscripts, which are a curious mixture of legendary history and craft ordinance associated with organisations of working stonemasons. Further copies of these texts continued to be produced during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and they still remain, in a much remodelled form, at the heart of the mythology of modern freemasonry. The process whereby freemasonry evolved from guilds of stonemasons can be traced most easily in Scotland, where minute books of masonic lodges survive from the early seventeenth century. It seems that guilds of working stonemasons recruited gentlemanly members to boost their numbers and influence, and gradually the non-masons took over. The exact nature of the process whereby the masonic lodges forgot about trade regulation and became bodies which used the imagery and craft legends of stone masons as an allegory for moral improvement ('speculative masonry' as it is termed) is again mysterious. The key event in the

modern history of freemasonry took place in 1717, when four lodges in London met together to form a Grand Lodge under a Grand Master. The formation of the Grand Lodge clearly had a major impact on the ideology and structure of speculative freemasonry, but details remain frustratingly elusive. Grand Lodge began to issue warrants for the formation of new lodges, which spread rapidly. A national structure was established with the formation of Provincial Grand Lodges, based broadly on county boundaries. Separate Grand Lodge were formed in Ireland in 1725 and in Scotland in 1736. Freemasonry spread very rapidly from Britain throughout Europe and the British Empire during the eighteenth century, so that it has been calculated that there were by 1789 something like 100,000 masons in Europe.

Now, I think a procession at Stratford in 1929 would be of passing interest to a medieval theatre specialist; but when we realise that this is a procession held by a group descended, not too indirectly, from medieval craft guilds, then I hope that the procession becomes of very great interest indeed. Processional activity was in the early eighteenth century at the heart of the functions of the English Grand Lodge. Many of these processions were conducted in connection with foundation stone ceremonies and the dedication of public buildings; one of the earliest references we have to a masonic procession is to the dedication of a stone at St Martin-in-the-Fields in 1722. However, there were masonic processions for many other purposes as well. The Grand Lodge

organised an annual Grand Feast and members of Grand Lodge usually processed in their masonic regalia to the feast. Church parades were common, with lodges formally processing to church services. An eighteenth-century diary describes how in the small town of Cowbridge in South Wales 'the Society of Free Masons, being in all about 24, went to Cowbridge Church by two and two, in their white aprons, with their trowels, hammers, and other instruments as belong to masonry, according to their rank in the fraternity, and had a sermon preached them...A great crowd admiring and looking at the sight, being the like never seen here before'. Masonic funerals naturally included a procession with the coffin; a Victorian rector of Monmouth turned away from his church gates the masonic procession accompanying the coffin of a deceased brother, not because he objected to the masonic component, but because he thought that alcoholic spirits had been consumed in the house of the deceased beforehand. What the procession then did is not recorded.

There were even masonic processions to social events such as theatre outings. Trevor Stewart, in his recent study of Scottish masonic processions, describes for example how in Dundee in 1738 a 'new set of comedians' performed the plays *The Jubilee* and *The Devil to Play* to the entire satisfaction of the Dundee freemasons, who, headed by their master, Lord Colvil, had marched to the playhouse 'in their proper apparel, with hautboys and other music'. In the summer, lodges in cities such as

London arranged outings to the country; the extent to which these were accompanied by formal processional activity would be an interesting subject for further investigation. Those wishing to cock a snook at freemasonry could do no better than organise a mock masonic procession. In 1741, Paul Whitehead, the Secretary of the Hellfire Club, was among the organisers of a mock masonic procession. A similar procession the following year was recorded in an engraving, *The Grand Procession of the Scald-Miserable Masons*, later reprinted by William Hone in his *Book of Days*. These mock processions led to restrictions on processions being imposed by the Grand Lodge in England.

Sir William Brewster's history of freemasonry in Scotland, published by the Secretary of the Scottish Grand Lodge Alexander Lawrie in 1800, is dominated by descriptions of processions held by Scottish masons for the laying of foundation stones, and this illustrates how such activities continued to be at the centre of Scottish freemasonry. The chief ceremonial expression of the urban development of Edinburgh from the 1760s were the large scale masonic processions connected with the building and opening of such major new works as the Royal Exchange, the various new bridges, the new university buildings and the national monument on Carlton Hill. Likewise in England, the Prince Regent while he was Grand Master actively promoted the use of masonic ceremonial as a means of associating himself with rebuilding in London elsewhere, performing

ceremonies for the laying of the foundation stones of, for example, the Covent Garden Theatre and the extensions to Windsor Castle 'in a masonic character'. Although foundation stone ceremonies were not exclusively performed by freemasons, masonic ceremonies of this kind were a frequent spectacle in many towns and cities of Britain throughout the nineteenth century.

The great frequency of such ceremonies is evident from scanning masonic newspapers such as *The Freemason*, established in 1869, and a survey of this periodical literature would be an effective means of developing an inventory of such processions. The most celebrated such ceremony was the laying of the foundation stone of Truro Cathedral by the Prince of Wales as Grand Master in 1880, but this was just one of many, ranging from well-known buildings such as Charing Cross Hospital, Hammersmith Bridge, the Indian Institute at Oxford (with the procession assembling in and leaving from the Sheldonian Theatre), the Central Tower of Peterborough Cathedral and the Scott Monument in Edinburgh, to much more humble buildings such as various Scottish gas works, the grandstand at Kelso racecourse and hospitals in Northampton, Halifax, Hartlepool and elsewhere. Moreover, these masonic ceremonies were not limited to Britain. They became very popular in America, where for example George Washington laid the cornerstone of the capitol with masonic ceremonial, and such processions became part and parcel of the culture of the British Empire. This picture shows the Duke of

Connaught laying the foundation stone of the English Hospital in Bulawayo.

Let us look briefly at some descriptions of masonic processions to get a clearer idea of their character. I'll start with the procession at the dedication and opening of the general infirmary in Sheffield on 4 October 1797. The day's proceedings began with a church service, and the procession left directly from the church. The procession was headed by two trumpeters on white horses, followed by two constables with staves, then a band of music and two tilers, the officials who guarded lodge meetings with drawn swords. The next component were members of various lodges from the towns and cities around Sheffield, dressed in their masonic regalia, again followed by stewards, this time bearing pink rods. Next came the richly embroidered banner of the senior of the two Sheffield lodges and members of the Sheffield lodges.

The basic form of freemasonry is known as craft freemasonry, but during the eighteenth century other orders sprang up, such as the Royal Arch and various masonic orders modelled on the Knights Templar. The Sheffield parade included the local chapter of the Royal Arch and Knights Templar, again with their elaborate banners. After the Templars came the Architect of the Hospital bearing a square, plumb line and level on a pink silk cushion.

The appearance of the architect marked the central part of the procession, which was very elaborate. It comprised the following elements:

- A chest containing the warrant and other documents associated with the oldest Sheffield lodge, covered with white satin, and hung round the sides with blue silk embroidered with masonic symbols;
- Two silver pitchers containing wine and oil carried by the Master of a Lodge in Halifax;
- A gold pitcher containing corn, borne by the Master of a lodge from Leeds;
- A standard of purple silk, with representations of justice, fortitude, temperance and prudence;
- The Master of a lodge from Stockport, carrying a light in a candlestick modelled in the form of an ionic column, regarded at that time as the 'first great light' of masonry;
- Two master masons carrying celestial and terrestrial globes;
- Another Master of a Stockport Lodge carrying a candlestick modelled in the form of a doric column, then considered the second great light of masonry;
- a lewis, the form of frame used to raise and lower stones, and a key symbol in freemasonry, carried by a master mason;

- the Master of a Nottingham Lodge carrying a candlestick in the form of a Corinthian column, the third great light;
- the Bible; a Mason's Square and a dividing Compass carried on a crimson velvet cushion, with gold fringe and tassels.

After these varied emblems came the officers of the Sheffield lodges, bearing emblems appropriate to their rank. The Secretaries carried green bags and minute books, and the Treasurers blue wands tipped with gold. The Junior and Senior Wardens in lodge meetings occupy chairs next to pillars of an appropriate order of architecture, and they also carried such pillars in the procession. Next came what was described as a flaming sword, apparently actually a sword with a wavy blade, the masonic Book of Constitutions, on a blue silk cushion, and then the Masters of the two Sheffield lodges with white wands, supporting the warrant of the Britannia Lodge; and finally two Stewards with pink rods.

The procession was in three separate divisions, and this highly symbolic masonic procession formed just the first division. The second division represented the civic culture of Sheffield and celebrated the achievement of the building of the infirmary. It comprised charity boys, builders, and medical staff of the infirmary, the clergy of

the city, followed by the infirmary flag, in royal purple and decorated with plumes of feathers. The flag was emblazoned with the slogan 'Sheffield General Infirmary - Go Thou and Do Likewise', a civic challenge if ever there was one. Behind this can the representatives of the cutlers company, the most powerful local authority in the rapidly growing town, and other civic officials. The third division was particularly varied and colourful. It was described as consisting of 'the Masters, Wardens, Assistants, and Members of those useful Institutions, the Sick Clubs, each Club preceded by a different coloured silk Flag, with the names of the Clubs inscribed thereon, and other devices painted on them, applicable to the different Societies.' These were the representatives of the friendly societies, many of whom also had their own colourful legendary ideology, such as the Oddfellows, Shepherds, and Foresters, and perhaps also wore appropriate costumes and insignia.

The description of this procession in the *Scientific Magazine and Freemasons' Repository* makes it clear that this is a form of civic ritual, analogous to those for example in sixteenth-century London and Dublin, and presenting many similar issues. In Sheffield's case this is particularly striking since although Sheffield grew very rapidly in the late eighteenth century, as in many other towns, civic authority failed to keep pace. Local government was effectively in the hands of the cutlers' company, which itself was riven by disputes. Events such as this parade in 1797 were one of the few ways of

demonstrating Sheffield's growing power and influence, and this was vividly illustrated by the way in which representatives of masonic lodges in surrounding towns were assigned subsidiary supporting roles in the masonic procession. This aspect of civic ceremonial is reflected by the elaborate arrangements made to ensure that as many people as possible could see the spectacle, with separate processional routes through the town being used to and from the infirmary. This element of civic ritual is repeated again and again in masonic processions at Sheffield, such as the parades at the opening of the Tinsley Canal, the town's first link to the sea, in 1819, and the laying of the foundation stone in 1856 of an alms house commemorating one of the town's great tragedies, the Holmfirth flood.

These analogies between eighteenth and nineteenth century masonic processions and earlier civic ritual were even more potently expressed when royalty was involved. For example, in 1866 the Prince of Wales, afterwards Edward VII, laid the foundation stone of a new building for the North Staffordshire Infirmary in Etruria. A contemporary newspaper report describes how the occasion was celebrated as a public holiday in the Potteries. Church bells were rung, the streets were festooned and garlanded, and decorative arches were hung over the roadway, welcoming the Prince and bearing his insignia and motto. These arches could be extremely elaborate. One incorporated a colourful display of tiles produced by a local tileworks; another

comprised elaborate floral and evergreen displays. The crowd of course was immense, and the newspaper noted with regret that on arrival the royal party passed through Stoke at a very quick trot. The most fascinating detail however is that admission was charged to witness the laying of the foundation stone: 'On the site itself an area had been enclosed where accommodation was afforded for upwards of two thousand spectators, with uncovered seats in the form of an amphitheatre. At the same time there was standing room for many more on the rising ground facing the amphitheatre. The seats were provided at a cost ranging from twenty shillings to five shillings and standing room was for one shilling only.' The public ritual had become a paying spectacle. Afterwards, it was noted, 'in honour of the royal visit, the various towns and villages were gaily decorated with arches and bunting of an elaborate description, with loyal manifestations.' At night immense numbers of people moved from place to place to witness the illuminations.

These masonic processions were valued as expressions of civic and local spirit even by those who were not masons. For example, in 1857 the Mayor and Corporation of Carmarthen insisted that the Provincial Grand Lodge undertake the laying of the foundation stone of the Carmarthenshire Infirmary. The Provincial Grand Master could not be contacted to make the arrangements, so his deputy hurriedly convened an emergency meeting to perform the duties. In 1892, the Vicar Designate of the new church of St Barnabas in Dulwich wrote to the

Grand Secretary asking if the foundation stone of the church could be laid with masonic honours. He explained: 'I am only too glad on my own part to fall in with the wishes of many of the congregation and of the choir - who are masons - supported as they are by the unanimous consent of all others of the building committee whom I have consulted. I am not a mason for it has never been brought to my notice so much as since I have taken up my new position as vicar designate here last September, but now from what I have seen and heard my one wish is certainly to enlist for and attach to the work of the church a cause which I see binds men so wonderfully together..' He went on to explain that Dulwich was intended to be a particularly genteel part of the metropolis, and he obviously felt that the participation of the masons in laying the foundation stone of his new church would emphasise its select character.

We are perhaps less well informed about many aspects of the logistics of these processions than we are about their fifteenth and sixteenth century counterparts. For example, the processions required precise timing, and sometimes involved some elaborate marching manoeuvres. Reports of processions at Swansea and Carmarthen refer to the use of elaborate triumphal arches through which the party performing the ceremony entered. This involved the rest of the procession forming two files to let the Grand Master through. Trevor Stewart has suggested that the military may have assisted in marshalling the procession, but there was always the risk

that something could go terribly wrong. Stewart gives an entertaining account of the chaotic procession which preceded the laying of the foundation stone of the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary in October 1870. This took place on a very windy day and the Grand Marshal on his horse failed to keep the large number of spectators under control. A forty minute delay in starting the procession and a series of false starts caused confusion. In Stewart's words, 'One can only imagine the scene that followed. On went the lodges along George Street at a cracking pace, drums beating, music blaring, banners flying and the freemasons trying to retain what dignity they could while holding on to their top hats....quite elderly brethren tried to run along the street to catch up. Then there was an unexpected hiatus. No carriages...Suddenly the artillery on the castle battlements opened up their thunder and the 'missing' carriages pulled by startled horses rattled round the corner...'

Stewart points out that for the Scottish processions we have lots of references to the use of light, ranging from torches to fireworks, and sound, such as music, church bells and cannons, in the procession, but again little detailed information about how this was used. Did the masons parade in their usual regalia, or were special costumes used for the processions? Again Stewart has some interesting hints. For example, the Lodge of Aberdeen provided their tylers with a blue coat with scarlet cuffs and 'an hairy cap with steel and brass front', while the Lodge of Scoon and Perth dressed their Tylers

in a quasi-Turkish costume complete with turban and scimitar. Particularly interesting are the activities of the Scottish Lodge Roman Eagle, founded in 1767 with the aim of conducting its ceremonies entirely in Latin. When the Duke of Athol laid the foundation stone of the Caledonian Railway Station in Glasgow in 1847, the procession of Lodge Roman Eagle was preceded by a Champion on horseback in a full suit of mail. The tylers, or *janitores* as the lodge called them, were dressed as roman legionaries. Togas were assumed by some other members of the lodge. The spectacular banner of the lodge was surmounted by a gilded eagle, and various other appropriate emblems, such as eagles and suns were carried by members of the lodge. The lodge borrowed costumes and equipment from a local theatre to ensure the effects were as spectacular as possible.

These examples (and I could pile up many more) illustrate how associated with freemasonry was a vibrant and largely forgotten processional culture which was lasted until well after the First World War. So what happened? Why did it disappear? Well, firstly, it hasn't entirely disappeared. It seems that in England the masonic procession largely vanished in the 1920s. Exactly how and why is again a subject for further investigation but anecdotally it is claimed that it was due to anti-masonic attacks by fascists. The abandonment of the procession has contributed to the public relations difficulties of freemasonry, since it effectively lost its public face and came to be seen as more sinister than it

is. Nevertheless, the memory of the masonic procession lives on, and in 2000 the Provincial Grand Lodge of Durham organised a masonic procession at Beamish Open Air Museum to mark the removal of a masonic hall to the museum. In Scotland, the masonic procession was never abandoned. In 1996, over 500 masons from all over the world gathered to mark the anniversary of the death of Robert Burns (himself a freemason). They processed in full regalia through the streets of Dumfries, accompanied by three pipe bands and representatives of many other organisations. Smaller-scale annual processions are still held by many Scottish masonic lodges.

I have concentrated this morning on masonic processions simply because they form part of my own current research into the history of freemasonry, but in considering their relevance to the medieval theatre, it is essential to remember that they form part of a much wider modern processional culture which has been largely forgotten. The early masonic processions were just one of many different types of processions in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century town. For example, in London different regional and national groups used processions to affirm their collective identity. The London Welsh organised an annual St Davids day procession, while societies of natives from the same county held processions which celebrated the mythology and superiority of their native county. The nineteenth-century processions clearly inherit many of

these traditions. It has been noted how masonic processions were frequently bolstered by the addition of representatives of friendly societies. The appearance in parades of such benefit societies as the various Druid societies, dressed in full druidic costume, added considerably to the colour and spectacle of processions. When a procession was arranged at Stockport on the coronation of George IV, the local lodge of Druids applied to walk first, on the grounds that the order dated back to the time of the Ancient Britons. The appearance of one Druidic order, in false beards and long white robes, at the opening of the Clifton Suspension Bridge in Bristol led to complaints from other Druid societies that they were brining the cause of Druidism into disrepute.

Friendly societies also organised their own separate processions, which were highlights of the local social calendar. Peter Gosden describes the annual outing of a lodge of Oddfellows from Monmouth to Ragland Castle in August 1828. The beginning of the Oddfellows' holiday was marked by a peal of bells. The participants marched to Oddfellows' Hall accompanied by a band. They set off in carriages to Ragland. Triumphal arches of flowers had been erected by villages along the road to Ragland. At Ragland, the Oddfellows paraded through the village in full regalia. The Ancient Order of Foresters formed a similarly striking spectacle when they paraded in Brigg in Lincolnshire in 1842. The *Stamford Mercury* reported that: 'The officers were most elegantly accoutred, and the horses on which they rode were as

richly caparisoned; and when they passed around the town in procession with music and their novel regalia, they formed an imposing spectacle. First rode an officer bearing the rules of the court, then the Treasurer with a purse as large as a pair of saddle-bags, next the Secretary with a pen in one hand and a large portfolio in the other, then marched the Chief Ranger well guarded with bow and bludgeon men, and the rear of this bright host was brought up by about 200 of the members wearing a cow's horn and a silk scarf as the livery of the court. After sundry marches and counter-marches, they dined at the Lion Hotel, under the able presidency of Mr Lucas Bennett, surgeon, of Winterton...⁴⁵⁵

Just as masonic processions need to be placed in the context of processions such as these so the decline of the masonic procession also needs to be considered as part of the general decline of this local processional activity. However, again it has not completely disappeared. Orange parades are the most well-known present-day survival, and indeed the way in which Orangeism has tainted such marching activity may be part of the reason for the decline of such parades by other organisations.

There are also other even more extraordinary survivals. Pam will be discussing one Scottish example in a minute,

⁴⁵⁵ Rex C. Russell, *Friendly Societies in the Caistor, Binbrook and Brigg Area in the Nineteenth Century* (Nettleton: Workers' Educational Association, 1975), p. 16

and I'd like briefly to mention another, the Selkirk Common Riding. This has recently been the subject of a study by an anthropologist Gwen Kennedy Neville. The Selkirk Common Riding takes place on the first Friday after the second Monday in June. The Selkirk town band leads a band of some five hundred horses and riders down the High Street, across the river and around the boundaries of the town's common lands. The riders are followed by a series of walkers organised in six ceremonial gild groups, each with their own flag: merchants, weavers, hammermen, fleshers, ex-soldiers, and colonials. The procession visits a series of stations, representing the ancient boundary stones, and at each station the band plays a set programme of music, which is always the same each year. After this tour of the town, the procession returns to the market square. The burgh flag and each of the ceremonial flags are handed over to the town provost. Before they are handed over to him, to quote Neville, 'in a powerful and beautiful dancelike motion of rhythm, strength, and skill, each standard bearer lifts above his head the large and heavy flag of his guild and waves in a slow figure-eight motion, to the bands playing "Up wi' the Souters of Selkirk", repeated over and over'. This ceremony is known as casting the flag.

In seeking parallels for medieval dramatic activity, METH has been at the forefront of examining and investigating religious processions and other comparable activity in continental Europe. However, I think that

examples such as the masonic and friendly society processions and the Selkirk Riding show that there is equally interesting and largely forgotten comparative material here in Britain. In fact, there has been an increasing interest in these processional activities by scholars in recent years, but not by drama specialists. They have rather been at the heart of the discussion about the 'invention of tradition'. Certainly, it would be wrong to suggest continuities which are not there. In the case of the masonic processions, for example, while ceremonies associated with the laying of foundation stones can be traced back to the middle ages, it is evident that prior to 1700 they were much more informal in character and that the elaborate pseudo-liturgical ceremonies we have been discussing were inventions of the eighteenth century. Moreover, where ceremonies did continue over many years, as in the Selkirk case, they naturally changed and evolved. As Gwen Kennedy Neville puts it, 'In order to continue its fight against change and to stay alive, the town itself must change, and one feature in this change process is the generation and constant reconstruction of its ceremonial life'. To present masonic and other processions of the modern city as direct descendants of the civic rituals of the fifteenth and sixteenth century would therefore be in an important sense a-historical. Nevertheless, to my mind there can be no doubt that they present many of the same interpretative issues. They are part of the same social and cultural phenomenon as their medieval and early modern precursors. In order to make

sense of the modern examples, we need to refer to the medieval parallels, and vice versa.

While we talk a great deal of interdisciplinarity, there is less talk of what might be called inter-temporality, that is to say people working across different chronological boundaries. Medievalists still keep a healthy distance from modernists. However, in analysing these modern processional phenomena medievalists have a great deal to contribute, for example, by helping to develop for these modern processional activities more rigorous classifications of the sort which have been used or modern drama. Conversely, there is a great deal that medievalists can learn from some of the new frameworks which social and cultural historians working on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have developed. There has been for example a great deal of interest in public space and the treatment of public space as an expression of hierarchies of power within for example provincial towns and cities. The redevelopment of city centres in towns such as Manchester and Sheffield in the late nineteenth century reflected the rise of new provincial elites. This treatment of public spaces could often be highly gendered, so that for example there were clear-cut distinctions between administrative and financial districts of the city and shopping areas. The idea of different spheres for different sexes achieved powerful physical expression in the shape of the late Victorian city. The control of public space in the late Victorian city further

reflected an anxiety about crowds and about how crowds could be controlled. The evolutions in processional activity in the late nineteenth century, with a greater emphasis on more controlled and sober crowd behaviour, is itself a strong expression of these anxieties.

Public space, gender and in particular the concept of different spheres, and crowds: these provide powerful interpretative frameworks which are just as relevant to medieval York as Edwardian Merthyr. Our vision of the public space of British towns and cities just before the First World War is perhaps of something ordered, hierarchical, quiet and sober. I'd like to end by briefly showing you some clips which might challenge those preconceptions. In the early 1990s, two large barrels containing over eight hundred nitrate films were found in the basement of a shop in Blackburn. They turned out to be the archive of a small company called Mitchell and Kenyon which specialised in producing short films of local streets and events. These included films of sporting events, calendar customs, scenes of workers leaving factories, and above all parades by organisations ranging from the Band of Hope to the freemasons. This archive is now being conserved and catalogued by the British Film Institute and Dr Vanessa Toulmin of the University of Sheffield. Unfortunately for copyright reasons I can't show you any of the pictures of the processions, but to give you a flavour of the archive I will show you four video clips from the projects web site. To my mind what they show is a different ordering of public space. They

show a street life which is physically tough, jostling and which uses many different strategies to express various hierarchies of power. Above all, it shows that public space is about crowds. This is the framework within which we also have to place medieval theatre, and it is the framework which the neglected processional activities I have shown you suggests.

The first I'm showing purely for local interest since it is a street scene in Blackpool and Lytham, which pans round to show a Blackpool tram.

The second is more characteristic of the collection and shows workers leaving the Co-op Wholesale Society works in Longsight (explain about fairgrounds)

This is an altogether more boisterous crowd at Pendlebury Colliery. Towards the end of the clip, you'll see a placard appearing advertising the showing of a film of a Passion Play, I presume Oberamgau.

Finally, this is more a ceremonial character, the opening of the Accrington steam trams.

This just gives you a flavour of the archive, but if I tell you that it includes some 150 films of processions of all different types I think you can see from that if nothing else that there was right up to modern times a processional culture in Britain which deserves our attention.

**Presentation to the Mitchell and Kenyon Study Day,
*National Film Theatre, 12 June 2003***

One of the many historical themes for which the Mitchell and Kenyon archive contains important material is the use of public space in urban areas. This is strikingly illustrated by the films of parades and processions. From the medieval period until comparatively recently, parades of many types were a prominent feature of town life. Some parades were avowedly political or religious, but others had a more social or convivial character. The most exotic examples are perhaps the processions of such fraternal organisations as the freemasons, who held public parades as part of ceremonies for the laying of foundation stones, and the friendly societies such as the Oddfellows, the Foresters and the Druids, whose colourful annual parades were enlivened by members dressed in exotic costumes associated with their order. In England, both the freemasons and the friendly societies abandoned public processions shortly before the Second World War, and these processions are a forgotten aspect of English urban life. The Mitchell and Kenyon archive recaptures the range and richness of this lost processional culture.

Reports of these processions in local newspapers and elsewhere give only a limited impression of their character. The procession was a form of street theatre, and film provides the only means of analysing these

events as performances, which makes the films of processions in the Mitchell and Kenyon archive particularly precious. Using the Mitchell and Kenyon films it is possible to explore such issues as the structure of the parades, the use of costume and banners, and the relationship of the parade to its audience. The films vividly convey how such parades were, in the words of the Welsh historian, Andy Croll, 'a living, breathing music-playing representation of the social order itself'. Historians have generally neglected parades as an expression of the social structure of towns, partly because of the ephemeral character of these parades and the difficulty of reconstructing them. The films of processions in the Mitchell Kenyon archive allow some of these difficulties to be surmounted, and will help open up the English urban procession to historical investigation.

The use of processions as social propaganda is particularly evident in the Catholic Whit Walks in Manchester. The Whit Walks were devised in the early nineteenth century as a more sober alternative to the boisterous recreations traditionally associated with that holiday. In Manchester, there was an Anglican parade on Whit Monday and a Catholic one on Friday: 'God save the King Monday morning and God save the Pope Friday afternoon', as one Manchester resident put it. The Catholic parade was one of Manchester's biggest spectacles and a primary social focus of the city's large Irish population. Through its composition, the parade

conveyed many subtle social messages. While the Anglican parade consisted almost entirely of children, men joined the Catholic parade since this gave an 'air of solidity'. The Catholic parade emphasised the respectability of the catholic population by requiring children to wear particular costumes and excluding those who were unsuitably dressed. The discipline of the parade was supposed to mirror that of the church itself. It was a matter of pride that rain would not disrupt the parade, a feature evident in some of the Mitchell and Kenyon footage of the conclusion of the 1904 parade.

The most skilful protagonist of the parade as propaganda in the late nineteenth century was the temperance movement. This was partly because it was necessary for the temperance movement to develop its own social activities as a counter-attraction to drink, and parades were a cheap and exciting form of gathering. In organising these parades, every opportunity was taken to demonstrate the rationality, purity and size of the temperance movement. As Susan Davis, the historian of nineteenth-century American parades, has put it, temperance parades 'opposed the usual pattern of urban festivity by constructing orderly and rational meanings in street ceremonies. The finely branched structure of the district associations enabled leaders to muster hundreds, and later thousands, of members into the streets...The marchers made parades so vast they seemed to take over the city'. Women and children, seen as emblems of

purity, were particular features of temperance processions.

Social commentators working on the history of parades in Northern Ireland have developed useful classification schemes, but no such analysis has been attempted for historic parades in English towns. The Mitchell and Kenyon archive will be invaluable in any such study. The Mitchell and Kenyon evidence not only assists in making distinctions between different types of parades but also brings to light unexpected parallels and similarities. It is evident, for example, that there are many points of comparison between the much older Lady Godiva procession in Coventry and the Manchester Whit Walks and temperance parades. A distinction is usually drawn between processional activity of this kind and calendar customs such as the well dressings and egg rollings. However, the film evidence again highlights similarities between these occasions, and suggests that perhaps these distinctions need to be reconsidered.

Interpreting the Mitchell and Kenyon evidence on parades is of course not without its problems. On a superficial reading, the Mitchell and Kenyon films might be seen as recording a vibrant street culture which has now vanished. But some of the parades which are prominent in the Mitchell and Kenyon archive, such as the Whit Walk and the temperance parade, were untypical by their inclusion of women and children and sought to subvert the existing street culture, promoting

alternative models of respectability. The Mitchell and Kenyon archive may thus give a skewed picture of processional activity, and this may be connected with the process whereby these films were commissioned (it is known for example that the temperance campaigners made use of film, so it is not surprising to find temperance parades represented here). Another important area in which the Mitchell and Kenyon archive gives a partial view of processional activity is in the size of the procession itself. The Catholic Whit Walk in 1904 took two hours and five minutes to pass Free Trade Hall and contained about 18,000 participants. The Mitchell and Kenyon film provides vivid testimony of how this parade appeared, but even the three films of the procession in the archive offer just a tantalising glimpse of the whole.