

## GRAND LODGES IN THE BRITISH ISLES

by

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### Formation of the Premier Grand Lodge

King George I entered London on September 20, 1714, and after the rebellion was over in 1716, the few lodges in London, finding themselves neglected by Sir Christopher Wren, thought fit to cement under a Grand Master as the Center of Unity and Harmony.

There were four who met as follows:

- 1) At the Goose and Gridiron Ale-house in St. Paul's Churchyard (Now Lodge of Antiquity No.2).
- 2) At the Crown Ale—house in Parker's Lane near Drury Lane (This lodge was erased in 1736).
- 3) At the Apple-Tree Tavern in Charles Street, Convent Garden (lodge of Fortitude and old Cumberland No. 12). This lodge accepted a warrant in 1723 and thereby lost its designation as one of the time immemorial lodges. Notwithstanding, this lodge was present at the organization of Grand Lodge. Anthony Sayer, the first Grand Master, was a member of this lodge.
- 4) At the Rummer and Grapes Tavern in Channel-Row, Westminster (Royal Somerset House and Inverness Lodge No.4).

They and some old brothers met at the Apple-Tree, and having put into the chair the oldest Master Mason (now the Master of a lodge) they constituted themselves a Grand Lodge pro tempore in due form, and forthwith revived the Quarterly Communication of the officers of lodges (called the Grand Lodge), resolved to hold the annual feast, and then to choose a Grand Master from amongst themselves, till they should have the honor of a noble brother at their head. Accordingly, on St. John's Day, in the third year of King George I, A.D. 1717, the assembly and feast of the Free and Accepted Masons was held at the Goose and Gridiron Ale-house.

The Grand Lodges in England were:

- 1) The Premier Grand Lodge which was subsequently known as Moderns. 1717-1813.
- 2) The Grand Lodge of all England. Formed at York in 1725. Active in Counties of York, Cheshire and Lancashire. Dormant 1740-1761. Re-activated until 1792.
- 3) The Most Ancient and Honourable Society of Free and Accepted Masons. Better known as "The Antients." 1751-1813.
- 4) The Supreme Grand Lodge formed by Scottish Craftsman in London, September 12, 1770.
- 5) The Grand Lodge of England, South of the River Trent. 1778-1790. Authorized by the Grand Lodge of All England. Constituted two lodges. Leading spirit: William Preston.

6)The United Grand Lodge of Antient Free and Accepted Masons of England. 1813-to date. Formed by union of the Moderns and Antients.

7)The Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of England According to the Old Institutions. Centered at Wigan, Northwest England, and worked from 1823-1866. Six lodges were constituted, one remaining lodge, Sincerity of Wigan No. 3677 (originally No. 492) which continued to be independent until 1913.

#### Ireland

1)The Grand Lodge of Ireland was formed in 1725.

#### Scotland

1)The Grand Lodge of Scotland was formed in 1736.

#### York Masonry

York Masonry is based on the Ancient York Constitutions which King Athelstane of York is said to have given in A.D. 926 to the Masons for their government. It was a charter from the King authorizing them to function as a organization of Masons. It imposed certain duties and granted certain privileges to a body of Masons organized under it. Every Masonic lodge had a copy of it or at least a manuscript which its members believed to be a copy of it. When the Grand Lodge of England was organized in 1717, there were many copies scattered over the land and no Masons thought of questioning this authority as containing the fundamental law of Freemasonry.

The Grand Lodge of All England (York) and the Grand Lodge of England (London) seem to have worked in perfect harmony, and there is no record of a protest when either of them chartered lodges in the territory of the other.

The Grand Lodge of England (Moderns) established a Provincial Grand Lodge at York which virtually absorbed the York Grand Lodge and the latter ceased to exist about 1792. Its influence, however, lived on and is still perpetuated in the term "York Rite" or "York Masonry", which is applied to the system of Masonry which has been based on the Constitutions whose legendary origin is York.

In 1738, several of the good brethren in London became dissatisfied with some of the transactions in the Grand Lodge of England, pulled away from the regular lodges, and began to have what we now call communications and initiated candidates without sanction or authority of the Grand Lodge. Since the dissensions could not be reconciled, a new Grand Lodge was established in London and, under the claim that they were governed by the Ancient York Constitution which had been adopted in York, gained many influential persons in England, and were even recognized by the Grand Lodges of Scotland and Ireland. This new Grand Lodge called itself the "Antients", as having held to the old customs and modes, and referred to the premier Grand Lodge as the "Moderns having modernized the work. The Ancient York Lodges became so popular during this period that a majority of the Lodges and provincial Grand Lodges established in this country derived their warrants from the Grand Lodge of Ancient York Masons.

In 1756, Lawrence Dermott, who was Grand Secretary, published a book of Constitutions which became

the code of Masonic Law for all who adhered to the Ancient York Lodge, while the Grand Lodge of Moderns were governed by the regulations contained in Anderson's Constitution.

The two Grand Lodges finally reconciled their differences, and in 1813 the two bodies became consolidated under the name and title of the Grand Lodge of Ancient Freemasons of England.

Let us examine in further detail the Antient Grand Lodge during its existence.

Freemasonry had been very popular in Ireland, even before its Grand Lodge of 1725. After 1725, Lodges sprang up in almost every Irish village. Many Englishmen lived in Dublin, and many families of English origin lived here and there in Ireland, especially in North Ireland. It was commonplace for Irish and Anglo-Irish to move to England, to enter business and the professions there, to attend school, etc. During the food famines this number was greatly increased. Among these was a large number of Masons. The majority of these were in retail business or were carpenters, painters, brick-layers, machinists and other trades. But when these Irish residents or citizens of London who were members in regular Irish Lodges came to visit Lodges in London or to demit to them, they were turned away, were snubbed, were looked down on because by that time (in the 1730's) the Grand Lodge had become a fief of the Nobility, and its lodges had become exclusive and snobbish. A carpenter or a mason or a house-painter might be a member in good standing in a regular Irish Lodge, but he was not deemed worthy to sit among English "gentlemen". The Irish Masons held meetings among themselves, consulted the Grand Lodge of Ireland, set up a Grand Committee in the 1740's, and in 1751 turned this Committee into a regular Grand Lodge. This action was strictly in accordance with the Ancient Landmarks.

For various reasons too long to be presented here, the Premier Grand Lodge made changes in the Modes of Recognition and discontinued the ceremony of Installation of the Master. A number of the Lodges ceased to be Lodges and became convivial clubs, some very expensive. Because of this, a number of Modern Lodges took out Antient Charters, a number of St. John Lodges (Lodges not affiliated with any Grand Lodge) took out Charters for the first time, and many new Lodges were warranted. Ambulatory warrants were issued to army Lodges.

According to some historians, the Antient Grand Lodge was the salvation of Masonry as we know it.

### Question

Now that we have dealt with the essentials of Masonry in England, a question remains to discuss after this paper:

According to English history, building activities were extensive in England in the 1600's and 1700's. From our own knowledge and from references in this paper, the English were quite class conscious in this period. If you were not of the nobility or the upper middle class, you were looked down upon in English society. Operative Lodges, were composed of the working class, had very little ritual, and no morality or symbolism to teach. Since these "operative" Lodges were composed of craftsmen, why did the aristocracy of England join Lodges in the first place? While there have been some theories proposed, I ask you to contribute any ideas you have.