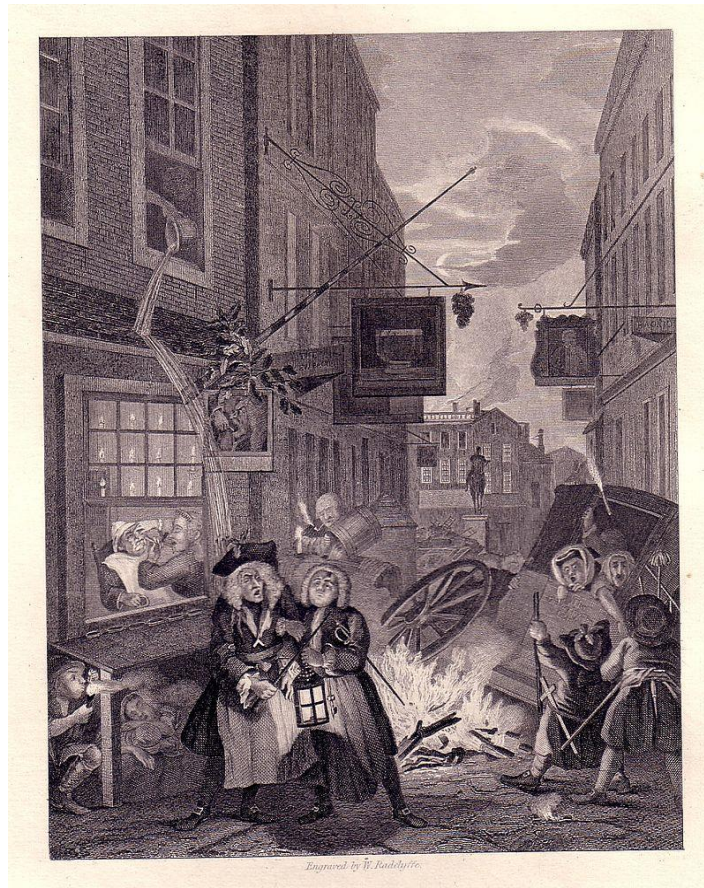


# 300 Years of English Freemasonry



The Goose and Gridiron Tavern c. 1720

Officially, the Grand Lodge of England was founded in London on St. John the Baptist's day, June 24, 1717, when four existing Lodges gathered at the Goose and Gridiron Ale-house in St. Paul's Church-yard in London and constituted themselves a Grand Lodge. The four lodges had previously met together in 1716 at the Apple-Tree Tavern, "...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." It was at that meeting in 1716 that they resolved to hold the Annual Assembly and Feast and then choose a Grand Master from among themselves, which they did the following year.

All four lodges were simply named after the public houses where they were accustomed to meet, at the Goose and Gridiron Ale-house in St. Paul's Church-yard (Lodge now called Lodge of Antiquity No. 2); the Crown Ale-house in Parker's Lane off Drury Lane; the Apple-Tree Tavern in Charles Street, Covent Garden (Lodge now called Lodge of Fortitude and Old Cumberland No. 12); and the Rummer and Grapes Tavern in Channel Row, Westminster (Lodge now called Royal Somerset House and Inverness Lodge No. IV). While the three London lodges were mainly operative lodges, the Rummer and Grapes, by the Palace of Westminster, appears to have been primarily a lodge of accepted and speculative gentlemen masons.

The new body became known as the Grand Lodge of London and Westminster, and it is unlikely in these early days that its members had any aspiration to be anything else. Little is known of Anthony Sayer, the first Grand Master, but the next, George Payne, rose to a high position within the Commissioners of Taxes. Payne served as Grand Master twice, in 1718-19, and 1720-21. The year in between was taken by John Theophilus Desaguliers, a scientist, clergyman, and a pupil of Newton. Thereafter, every Grand Master was a member of the nobility, although in these early years, it is unlikely that they were anything more than figureheads. The intention was to raise the public profile of the society, which evidently succeeded. In 1725, aside from London Lodges, the minutes of Grand Lodge show lodges located at Bath, Bristol, Norwich, Chichester, Reading, Chester, Gosport, Carmarthen, Salford, and Warwick.

This year, The United Grand Lodge of England is celebrating the 300th anniversary of organized Freemasonry in grand style, with more than 100 events scheduled ranging from cathedral services, special Lodge meetings, classic car rallies, family fun weekends and youth activities, to dinners and grand balls.



Freemasons' Hall, London

New gallery space in Freemasons' Hall, in London, is filled with a sumptuous exhibition, "Three Centuries of English Freemasonry," which traces the history of "... Freemasonry from its origins in the early days of industrialization, urbanization and empire to the significant social institution it had become by the 19th century, and explores how it fits into today's world."



The Museum contains an extensive collection of objects with Masonic decoration including pottery and porcelain, glassware, silver, furniture and clocks, jewels and regalia. Items belonging to famous and Royal Freemasons including Winston Churchill and Edward VII are on display together with examples from the Museum's extensive collection of prints and engravings, photographs and ephemera.

The Library and Museum's latest temporary exhibition marks the centenary of the opening of the Royal Masonic Hospital. This first opened in late 1916 to take casualties from the First World War. In 1933 the Hospital opened at a new site at Ravenscourt Park in West London where its award winning Modernist building broke new ground in hospital design. It then played a role in the Second World War treating over 9,000 personnel.

The Hospital and its staff were pioneers of many medical treatments and its nurse training facilities were renowned. By the late twentieth century the financial and operational challenges faced by the Hospital proved too much and it closed in 1996.

Deputy Grand Master Jonathan Pence relates that in many ways, the founders of the Grand Lodge of England were experiencing turbulent times, just as we are today. These included a new ruling dynasty following the ascent of King George I in 1714, and a sizable rebellion from supporters of the old dynasty defeated in 1715.

He further states, "...the principles of the Craft have withstood the test of time and are as relevant today as they were then. We may restate them in more modern language as integrity, honesty, fairness, kindness and tolerance, but their essence is unchanged and we should all be justly proud of them and, needless to say, act in accordance with them."

The 200,000 members in 6,800 Lodges within Great Britain are united with their Brethren around the world in these values, which have enabled the Fraternity to endure and flourish for 300 years and will continue to guide Masonry into its fourth century.



**We offer our sincere congratulations and warm Fraternal Greetings to our Brethren of the United Grand Lodge of England, from the Officers and Brethren of Tuckahoe Lodge No. 347 Richmond, Virginia.**