



You may wonder why, when visiting another lodge, the ceremony appears in some parts different to that of your own lodge. The essence of the answer stems from the heritage of the stonemasons ensuring that the 'secrets' or qualifications of its different levels were maintained. Maintaining secrets remained a feature as lodges began to accept speculative or non-stonemasons. By 1717 and the formation of the Grand Lodge, the specific 'secrets' of a mason appear to have widened to include the whole ceremony. The details of the ceremonies were not written or published as a matter of principle by Grand Lodge. This 'secrecy' led to some 'exposures' of the ceremonies such as Pritchard's *'Masonry Dissected'* which was published in 1730.

As the number of Lodges increased, so the 'word-of-mouth' experience led to variations in the ceremonies. Around the 1750s there was the split of the current Order between the new *Atholl or Antient* Lodges and the existing established *Moderns* Lodges with their own form of ceremony. When the two Grand Lodges united in 1813 a Lodge of Reconciliation was established to produce a standardised set of ceremonies or ritual. However Grand Lodge refused to allow the printing of the new ritual but arranged for the ceremonies to be demonstrated in London. Thomas Cave of 329 attended one of these and no doubt later made notes, as did others. It was later in the nineteenth century that printed rituals became common. These printed rituals reflected local or regional versions such as Bristol, Oxford,, WestEnd, or Emulation 'working. However as the cartoon suggests not everything is down to regularity.

As a member of 329 you may notice that one of the signs of a Master Mason appears to be distinctive to this Lodge. I believe this sign was introduced by a former Lodge DC.

Editor: David Perkins



The First Degree Explained



Earlier this year W Bro Ray Beckingham, Provincial Grand Mentor, gave an explanation of the signs and symbolism of the 1st Degree at a special ceremony. Also pictured are WM W Bro Russell Chatwin and W Bro Steve Defries, who conducted the ceremony.

Congratulations to Steve Defries on his new Provincial Appointment as Provincial Assistant Grand Almoner. This will keep him very busy and as a result he has had to step down as the Co-ordinator of the Teddies Scheme.

Regretfully two of our long-standing members Bro Derek Rogers and Bro Ian Crinks passed to the Grand Lodge Above during the summer.

Congratulations to Richard and Steph Coombs who married in early September. They went on honeymoon to Venice and then cruised the Dalmatian Coast.

Congratulations to Kevin and Sharon Saunders who also married in September and then travelled to the sunshine of Lanzarote.

THE NEW ORGAN

The Lodge moved into the new Masonic Hall in 1894. Two years later a Victorian Pump organ was purchased which cost £160. In 1919 it was replaced by the pipe organ that has been used for almost a century but replaced in the summer.

Pipe organs are notoriously expensive to maintain. Apart from regular tuning and minor maintenance, they are made with large number of mechanical valves, switches and other items which need complete refurbishment every thirty or so years. The last re-build of the organ was in the early 1980's, so the next re-build was coming up soon. The cost of re-building an organ of the size that we had in the temple would be in the region of £35,000.

Last time the re-build was needed, there were no real alternatives. Digital organs were in their infancy, and the quality of sound was not particularly good. However, the improvements over the last 30 years have been spectacular. (Just think of the improvements in computers over the same period.)

Playing the old organ during the early part of this year was becoming more and more difficult with pipes going out of tune very quickly, and some parts of the organ becoming ineffective – all of which was pointing to the need of a re-build.

It was therefore decided to take the plunge and replace the old organ with a suitable electronic version.

In essence, the new organ is approximately the same size as the old instrument, with two manuals and a set of pedals. That is where the similarity ends. The old organ had a total of 14 different sounds, whereas the new organ has 34. The new organ can be played by someone without using the pedals (useful for visiting organists who are less experienced) and will have the capability for pre-recorded music to be used when a real organist is not available. It will not require the expense of regular maintenance and should be usable for many years to come.

If we were in any doubt whether the old organ had to be removed, when we were taking it apart there was some mains wiring inside the instrument that all the insulation disintegrated upon touching it, successfully blowing all the mains fuses. I dread to think what could have happened if we had not decided on this course of action.

In order to maintain the appearance of the temple, the façade of pipes has been kept, and all the electronics hidden behind.

I hope you like the new sound.

Martin Emslie

SPECIAL EVENT

The three Organists who play at the Hall are putting on an organ recital on Saturday 19 November accompanied by two lady singers. The start is 7.30p m with supper to follow. More details in the November mailing.

GRAND LODGE NEWS

Charity You may not be aware that £17 of your subscription is a charitable donation to Grand Lodge. Additionally there are four annual Provincial Festivals that raise £10 million per year which is distributed to Masonic charities and non-masonic charities. At present there are 21 Festivals running through to 2020, including Somerset which will support The Grand Charity. In 2015 £4.8 million was given to 393 non-Masonic Charities. Masonic families were awarded £15.9 million. 4.603 Masonic families were helped. Since 1981 over £2 million has been given to aid global and UK disasters.

A new major **exhibition** *Three Centuries of English Freemasonry* opened in the Library and Museum in April 2016. The Library and Museum has been working with *Ancestry* since 2014 on digitalising membership records to make them available for masonic research. *Ancestry UK* has now published online some 1.7 million names covering the period 1750-1921. The Library and Museums Trading subsidiary-*Letchworths*– has provided over £1 million since 2002 to support its work.

Did you know that in the fund raising for the building of the new Freemasons Hall in Great Queen Street that in 1925 some 7,250 masons had lunch at Olympia with the Most Worshipful The Grand Master. This is still the largest recorded catered meal in Europe. At the end of the lunch it was announced that £825,000 had been raised for the Building Fund. On 19 July 1933 some 5,353 brethren were present at the dedication of the new building.

At the **September Quarterly Meeting** at Grand Lodge The RW Deputy Grand Master, Jonathan Spence (an Honorary member of 329) concluded by saying “the principles of the Craft have withstood the test of time and are as relevant today as they were 300 years ago. *We may now 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.

To finish, I will quote King Frederick II, or The Great, of Prussia who said his support of the Craft came from its objectives being, “ the intellectual elevation of men as members of society and making them more virtuous and more charitable”. I do not think that his view can be bettered.”

