

**ADDRESS TO THE DISTRICT GRAND LODGE OF THE SOUTH ISLAND TO COMMEMORATE
THE 300TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDING OF THE UNITED GRAND LODGE OF ENGLAND.**

GIVEN AT CHRISTCHURCH ON 13TH MAY 2017

BY DISTRICT GRAND ORATOR, W BRO KARL MOEN CBE.

Most Worshipful Brother M Winger Grand Master Grand Lodge of New Zealand, Right
Worshipful Brother G.W Rowe, District Grand Master for South Island New Zealand. Right
Worshipful Brother B.J. Westhead, District Grand Master for North Island New Zealand ,
Right Worshipful Brother A McGregor, Provincial Grand Master for New Zealand, Grand
Lodge of Ireland, Brother M.A, Gilkison Right Worshipful District Grand Master for New
Zealand South, Grand Lodge of Scotland. Right Worshipful Very Worshipful, Worshipful and
Brethren all, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In 1717 two events occurred which were to impact greatly on New Zealand and about which
there has been considerable speculation in the media of late. The first was the rupture of
the Alpine Fault. Unfortunately, nothing was written down at the time and only the stones
can tell the story. So, any discussion as to the actual events must necessarily be full of
conjecture, imagination and estimate. The second event was the formation of the Grand
Lodge of England and the actual records of this major event seem to have suffered a similar
fate to those of the Alpine Fault. That is an almost complete lack of documentation
between around 1680 to 1723 as to the state of the craft and the Premier Grand Lodge in its
first years. What is recorded was probably written in hindsight and often provides
conflicting facts and views; and so, like the geologists' assessments of the earthquake and
its impact, the writings of many learned Masonic Scholars can be open to interpretation.
But do not worry I shall refrain from flights of fancy and hopefully keep just to the facts as
they are generally known and accepted. In doing so I acknowledge my sources: "The
Gentlemen's Magazine of 1731", maybe the eighteenth century equivalent of the News of
the World, the "Freemasons' Guide and Compendium" by Bernard Jones, "Foundations –
the Prestonian Lecture" by Ric Berman, "Over 300 Years of Masonic Ritual" by Martin
Gandoff, "Freemasonry Today" and "The Square" and last but not least the Wellington
Lodge Newsview.

Now where to start? Like the Alpine Fault the foundations of Freemasonry have existed for ages. Much has been written about its development over the years leading up to the creation of the first Grand Lodge but that is the story for another time and place. It is acknowledged that the Freemasons Lodges can trace their origins to the Stone Masons Lodges or Guilds and that over the years there was a growing acceptability of Non-operative members. There is documented evidence of the initiation of a non-operative in 1646 and further records of non-masons being entered into Scottish Lodges in 1600 and 1634. It is probable that by the end of the 17th century lodges existed in which there were no operative masons. We also need to briefly consider the quality of life during that period: We know from records that food and water were of dubious quality conveying disease, living conditions far from ideal, medical knowledge and treatments basic and that life expectancy was around 40 years of age. I wonder how many of us present today would have been around in those days – not too many I fear. Life was hard in the 17th century with its religious strife, a civil war with the creation of the Commonwealth, the restoration of the Stuarts followed by William and Mary of Orange ending with the arrival of House of Hanover in 1714. The Great Fire of London which followed the Great Plague of London took place just fifty years before the establishment of the Grand Lodge.

In the Prestonian Lecture “Foundations” Ric Berman argues that while many aspects of Masonic ritual can be dated properly to the medieval period, modern Freemasonry and the Grand Lodge of England arose in the eighteenth century as a consequence of a step change brought about by new leadership and not as the inevitable consequence of a continuing trend of measured evolution, Freemasonry in the early eighteenth century altered radically over a short period of little more than two decades to mirror the political and philosophical objective of those who led it. The mind set of those who created and controlled the Grand Lodge of England was determined by many factors but perhaps most significantly by the political, economic and religious insecurity that followed not just successive European wars but also the perceived and real threats posed to the newly installed Hanoverian king George I and his Whig government by the Jacobite supporters of the exiled James Stuart – the “king over the water”.

At the beginning of the 18th century there was a need to re-establish the throne, renew its authority and create the stability that hopefully would follow. It is thought that many Masons hoped that Masonry might offer a means of conviviality while at the same time, give and receive charity and to discuss and reflect on philosophical, moral and social issues. Lodge meetings were still basic. It is also thought that the actual meeting consisted of little more than the reading of the Old Charges and the giving of signs, tokens, words, etc. The Catechisms were probably treated like a lecture, being read at the dinner table. Lodges generally were autonomous, each claiming to exist from time immemorial, setting rules for membership qualification, and holding allegiance, not to some higher masonic authority, but probably to certain “agreed” ancient customs and the Old Charges, including the right to form new lodges. With lodges meeting when they wanted to and with no real fraternisation with other lodges, even though their workings might have been similar and with signs and words being widely recognised and accepted, it is very unlikely that there really existed an overall masonic community as such.

So we arrive at 1717 or thereabouts. Martin Gandoff, in his book “Over 300 Years of Masonic Ritual” suggests that four lodges got together and in principle formed a temporary Grand Lodge at the Apple Tree Tavern in 1716 or early 1717. There is no knowledge of the traditions and backgrounds of these lodges, nor is it known if any other lodges were invited to participate. At this assembly, the Brethren then present, by a show of hands elected Mr Anthony Sayer (Gentleman, the Master of St Paul’s Lodge) to the office of Grand Master of Masons. Then on St John the Baptist’s Day (24th June) 1717 the assembly, feast and formal election were held at the Goose and Gridiron Ale-House: the Grand Lodge was styled as The Premier Grand Lodge of England, with jurisdiction of London and Westminster. (At that time, the actual area covered was probably not much more than a few square miles). Two Grand Wardens were appointed and St John’s Day reserved for the Annual Assembly and Feast in the future. The four lodges involved met at:

The Goose and Gridiron Ale-House in St Paul’s Churchyard,
The Crown Ale House in Parkers Land, near Drury Lane,
The Apple Tree Tavern in Charles Street, Covent Garden, and
The Rummer and Grapes Tavern in Channel Row, Westminster.

At this meeting the Grand Officers, in establishing their status by claiming to conform to old traditions, agreed to:

Reinstate the Quarterly Communication of the officers of lodges,

Re-institute the Annual assembly and feast, and

Choose a Grand Master from among themselves until they could convince a noble brother to do them an honour.

One of the first actions by the new Grand Lodge was to seize control of the machinery for creating new lodges and it decreed that no Masons might assemble as a lodge without Warrant from the Grand Lodge, although exception was made in the case of the original "four Old Lodges" which were conceded to exist as of immemorial right. In 1721, the Duke of Montagu became Grand Master and the credibility and popularity of the craft was boosted and a rash of new lodges constituted. The need for rules and regulations was accepted by the Premier Grand Lodge but it was not until 1723 that a formal set of constitutions, produced by James Anderson, a Scottish Minister were printed. The achievements of the Premier Grand Lodge can be measured by the number of lodges which came under its jurisdiction, from just four in 1717 to over sixty in 1725 and around two hundred in 1740 with its presence spreading from London to provincial England and Wales and overseas to the eastern seaboard of the Americas and to Bengal in India. This concept of Grand Lodges soon spread with the Grand Lodge of Ireland being constituted in 1725 and the Grand Lodge of Scotland in 1736. Today the United Grand Lodge of England recognises nearly 200 Grand Lodges. At this stage, it is probably appropriate to observe that there have been other Grand Lodges in England with four being in existence at the same time. There was first the Premier Grand Lodge of England established in 1717. In 1725 an old Lodge in the City of York formed itself into "The Grand Lodge of All England with its influence restricted to York, Cheshire and Lancashire. The third Grand Lodge was that of the "Antients in 1751 of which more shortly. The Grand Lodge of England, South of the River Trent was established in 1779 under the authority of the Grand Lodge at York but quietly faded after ten years of uneventful existence

The development and progress of Freemasonry in England was however not a smooth one.

I am referring to the creation in 1751 of the rival Grand Lodge known as the "Antients". This contrasts with the Premier Grand Lodge who were styled the "Moderns". I will not go into the details of the schism other than to say that it was a very bitter and acrimonious split lasting over sixty years and in some ways a social and political struggle between the moderns with the Whig Party and Hanoverian monarch and the antients with the Tory Party and Jacobite supporters. Matters came to a head in 1799 when the Unlawful Societies Act was passed which originally defined as an unlawful combination and confederacy "any society the members whereof shall be required or admitted to take any oath or engagement". Societies would be required to admit members "by open declaration at a public meeting". Both Grand Lodges, Moderns and Antients vehemently opposed the provisions of the Bill and managed to obtain exemptions for Lodges, Chapters, the Grand Lodges and the Grand Lodge of Scotland under the proviso that the Grand Secretaries would each year deposit with the Clerks of the Peace details of the time and place of meeting of all approved lodges in each county, together with a declaration that those 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", such book to be available for inspection by local magistrates. In retrospect, the Act of 1799 was to benefit the Craft. Although the final Act did not refer to the Grand Lodges by name but only to "societies or lodges of Free Masons", the inclusion of Grand Lodge representatives in informal discussions on the legislation constituted de facto recognition of their position as controllers and regulators of legally organised freemasonry. The Grand Lodges, to protect themselves, decided to set up and maintain detailed records of membership of lodges which, together with the individual returns lodges were required to submit annually, in later years have proved invaluable sources for social and genealogical research. The threat to the continued existence of freemasonry, posed by the original bill, also forced the Antients and Moderns to co-operate in opposing it, which was undoubtedly a factor in the move towards union. The Act remained on the Statute Books until 1967 but a vestige remains in the ritual of the UGLE when the Senior Deacon states that one of his duties is "to await the return of the Junior Deacon", this being a reference to the time when a local magistrate or justice of the peace could demand to have delivered to him a list of all those present at a lodge before the meeting could be legally tyled.

In 1809 a special lodge, the Lodge of Promulgation, was established for the purpose of promulgating the ancient landmarks and instructing masons of the “Moderns” in any necessary alterations. Then in 1813 Augustus, Duke of Sussex was elected Grand Master of the Moderns while his brother Edward, Duke of Kent was elected Grand Master of the Antients, having already been appointed Deputy Grand Master of the Moderns. Thus on St John’s Day December 27 1813 the two Grand Lodges united with the following proclamation: Be it known to all men, That the Act of Union between the two Grand Lodges of Free and Accepted Masons of England, is solemnly signed, sealed, ratified, and confirmed, and the two Fraternities are one, to be henceforth known and acknowledged by the style and title of THE UNITED GRAND LODGE OF ANCIENT FREEMASONS OF ENGLAND, and may the Great Architect of the Universe make their Union eternal,”. The lesson we can take from this is that if people meet in good faith it is possible to move forward, overcome prejudice and create positive change. Negotiation, compromise and good faith are the key ingredients and personify the true masonic ideals.

That is not to say that the Union was readily and immediately accepted by all and disagreements persisted for some time. But the Union had put the United Grand Lodge on a strong footing for its expansion into the wider world of the British Empire; for as the Empire expanded with trade and immigration so did the United Grand Lodge of England. It is now possible to search the microfiche records of the United Grand Lodge of England from 1755 to 1921 courtesy of Ancestry.com and these records, in conjunction with the Directory of Lodges and Chapters to study the development of Freemasons Lodges in many exotic places with strange sounding names. From the Northern Lodge of China in Shanghai, to the Excelsior Lodge in Buenos Ayres, the Saint Lawrence Lodge in Montreal, the Zetland Lodge at Fort Beaufort Cape of Good Hope and the Lodge of Hope in Launceston Van Diemen’s Land. Trade and immigration were closely followed by the establishment of Masonic Lodges. And I must hasten at this stage to add that this movement and growth was not restricted to the United Grand Lodge of England alone for the Grand Lodges of Ireland and Scotland were also spreading but that story is for them to tell. The first masonic lodge in New Zealand was formed in 1842 only two years after the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi The first English Lodge in Canterbury was The New Zealand Lodge of Unanimity No 879 which was registered on 20 August 1852 as meeting in Lyttelton closely followed by the St

Augustine Lodge No 885 which met in Christchurch. Understandably as the pressure for some form of independence or self-government grew in the colonies overseas so there was a growing movement for the creation of nationally independent Grand Lodges. Apart from the Declaration of Independence of the thirteen North American colonies in 1776 which led to the creation of new Grand Lodges in newly independent colonies, this process really started with Canada in 1855, spreading to Australia in 1884 and New Zealand in 1890; perhaps a precursor to self-government. In 1890, there were over 80 Lodges in New Zealand under the Register of the United Grand Lodge of England of which some 34 continue to meet here under its Register

The two World Wars both had a great effect on English Freemasonry. In the three years after the First World War over 350 new lodges were set up, and in the three years after the Second World War nearly 600 new lodges came into being. In many cases the founders were servicemen who wanted to continue the camaraderie they had built up during their war service, and were looking for a calm centre in a greatly changed and changing world.

Given that Freemasons are all equal and free to associate or not as is their will would the increase not have happened anyway without the existence of the Grand Lodges. I very much doubt it for the Grand Lodges provided the focus, the ground rules or Landmarks by which we can judge ourselves and live our lives to the benefit of all.

Today the United Grand Lodge of England has over 7500 lodges in 47 Provinces and 34 Districts ranging from Europe, Africa, Asia, and Oceania and not omitting the Grand Inspectors and Independent Lodges. So far, I have focussed on the history of the United Grand Lodge but no lecture would be complete without mention of the Charitable works of the order. As you all know charity being the characteristic of a freemasons heart the United Grand Lodge of England places great importance in Charity and Masonic charity is exercised at every level: individual lodges make gifts and give aid to their own communities and every province and district gives large sums of money to regional causes. Nationally in England, the efforts are channelled through the Masonic Charitable Foundation – formerly The Freemasons' Grand Charity, Royal Masonic Trust for Girls and Boys, Royal Masonic Benevolent Institution and Masonic Samaritan Fund. In the case of the District of South

Island New Zealand charity is coordinated through the South Island English Masonic District Charitable trust. The people of Christchurch were beneficiaries of a generous grants of around \$300K from the District Grand Lodge of South Island New Zealand in the aftermath of the 2011 earthquake, with funds coming from the United Grand Lodge of England and the Grand Lodge of Ireland, to mention but two from Freemasons around the world.

To conclude I can do no better than to quote from an Article by the Deputy Grand Master who wrote in the Winter 2016 Edition of Freemasonry Today.

“It has become very noticeable that the times in which we live are described by some as ‘uncertain’. This word is used to describe many aspects of our national life, almost as a default mechanism. In many ways our predecessors, who were there at the foundation of the Grand Lodge, would have felt a certain affinity and seen possible parallels with their own time, although they would probably have used the word ‘turbulent’ to describe the second decade of the 18th century.

In their case, the uncertain times included a new' ruling dynasty following the accession of King George I in 1714, a significant rebellion from supporters of the old dynasty defeated in 1715, and an incipient share scandal with the South Sea Bubble. In those and the intervening uncertain times of the subsequent 300 years, the principles of the Craft have withstood the test of time and are as relevant today as they were then. 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.

I have found the research for this address a fascinating and absorbing study and trust that you have found this very brief glimpse of the history of the United Grand Lodge of England of interest also. Thank you all for your attention.