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THE ROYAL ANTEDILUVIAN ORDER OF BUFFALOES

The Order was founded in August 1822 at the Harp Tavern, Covent Garden (opposite the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane) by two stage artists, Joseph Lisle and W. Sinnett who were unable to gain access to their trade guild. Originally the members were all in the theatrical profession and the meetings were essentially social, the original initiation was probably intended as a burlesque on Freemasonry. The Buffalo title related to a music hall song 'Chasing the Buffalo'

The Metropolitan lodges joined together to form the Grand Lodge of England (GLE) in 1866 and formulated successful plans for central and provincial organisation and administration. Lodges that did not join the Grand Lodge and others that subsequently broke away formed their own associations or 'Banners' including the National, Grand Surrey and Grand Executive. The GLE currently has its headquarters in Harrogate.

Administration is based upon the Masonic model with the Grand Lodge headed by a Grand Primo (i.e. Grand Master), Provincial Grand Lodges and subordinate Lodges and Chapters, with Grand Provincial and Lodge Officers. Lodges are warranted by the Grand Lodge, which also issues Grand Lodge certificates to individual members.

The original burlesque ritual was dropped in 1866, with the formation of the Grand Lodge. The ritual was again revised in the 1930s when much of the legendary 'history' of the Order was removed from the ceremonies. The Order has four degrees:

Kangaroo Degree
Primo Degree
Knight Order of Merit
Roll of Honour

The first two are given in Lodges and the third and fourth in Chapters. The ceremonies are fairly simple, consisting of the taking of an oath of fidelity and secrecy, the giving of secret marks in recognition and moralising homilies teaching principles of morality. Promotion is based on attendance and commitment to the order.

The members wear regalia similar to that of other fraternities:

The first or 'Kangaroo' degree wears an apron bearing two kangaroos.

The Certified Primo (Equivalent to a masonic lodge master) wears an apron and a jewel. When in office a collar or chain is worn. The apron differs between banners.

The Knight of Merit wears a red bordered apron with matching shoulder sash embroidered with the name of the awarding lodge and the words "KOM", gauntlet cuffs, collar chain and collarette.

The Roll of Honour wears similar regalia but with a sky blue border and is embroidered with the words "ROH".

A jewel is presented at each level from Certified Primo and these are generally worn together. Each has the dates of the previous degrees awarded engraved on a scroll in the ribbon or on bars attached to it. The jewels bear the horns of a buffalo and often the head as well. Passing through the degrees is marked by breaking a clay pipe wrapped in ribbon of the colour of the degree and it is a tradition for all present at the ceremony to autograph the plain pipe of the Kangaroo Degree.

Many jewels are produced for commemorative reasons and to raise charitable funds. They are sometimes worn en masse rather as freemasons did in the 1800s.

The Buffaloes had an inner order 'The Knights of the Golden Horn'. This became independent in the 1920s and still exists.

The RAOB maintains a website at <http://www.raobgle.org.uk/> where they may be contacted and more may be read about the history of the organisation.



ROAB First Degree Kangaroo Apron



Certified Primo Jewel



RAOB Roll of Honour Regalia



Buffalo in Knight of Merit Regalia