

THE LIBRARY AND MUSEUM OF FREEMASONRY

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Library and Museum Charitable Trust of the United
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INFORMATION SHEET FREEMASONRY, FAMILY AND LOCAL HISTORY

The Library and Museum is the repository for the archives of the United Grand Lodge of England, the governing body of English freemasonry, Supreme Grand Chapter of England, the governing body for Royal Arch freemasonry, their predecessor bodies, for the archives of buildings and sites associated with the Grand Lodge, charitable bodies associated with Freemasonry, individual Freemasons and many lodges and chapters that have closed.

Using the Library and Museum

Admission to the Library and Museum is free and resources in the library, museum and archives are available for reference and research. It is located on the first floor of Freemasons' Hall (wheelchair access available). Power sockets for laptop computers are available and wifi password. A staffed photocopying service and photographic service is provided. Details of current charges for these services is available on request. Researchers are required to complete a Reader Registration Form (available on <http://www.freemasonry.london.museum/os/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/reader-registration-form-1.pdf>) and to provide photographic identification when they first use library or archive resources. Staff are always pleased to help visitors with enquiries, provide advice on how to use and access Library and Archive resources but cannot undertake extensive research on individual enquiries. As some resources are held off site, it is advisable to contact the Library and Museum when planning your research visit on libmus@freemasonry.london.museum

Information about individual members

Information about individual members is based on Annual Returns of members compiled by individual lodges and sent to Grand Lodge. The earliest such Returns date from the 1750s. These were used to create registers of members. Members are listed in the Registers under their lodge and according to their date of initiation or joining.

The type of information normally recorded in the membership registers are age, address and occupation and date of joining the lodge. The records do not contain any personal details regarding date of birth or marriage, details of family members or change of address.

The records cover lodges meeting in England and Wales and certain overseas areas, now or once forming part of the British Empire or Commonwealth.

The original Membership Registers cannot be made available to individuals to conduct their own research due to their conservation needs. However **there are two ways in which these registers can be accessed.**



Digitised Records on Ancestry

Over 1.7 million names listed in the registers from 1751-1921, fully searchable by individual name, are now available on www.ancestry.co.uk . You can access the records from anywhere in the world by taking an Ancestry subscription or you can use them for free in the Library and Museum during our opening hours. Ancestry is also accessible at many local record offices and some libraries.

The Library and Museum Research Service

Library and Museum staff can undertake searches from the digitised records for you and can also search for members before the 1750s or after 1921. A search fee is payable where no lodge name or number is known and this is not refundable in the event of a negative result. The fee is £31 per name. (This fee is £16.50 per name for members of the United Grand Lodge of England). If a lodge name or number is known this search service is free of charge. Details are available on the Family History page of the Library and Museum website at <http://www.freemasonry.london.museum/family-history/> where you can pay by debit or credit card.

There are lists of some members for the periods from 1723 -1730s included in the minute books of Grand Lodge. These are transcribed and indexed as Volume X of Quatuor Coronatorum Antigrapha (Class Mark: A31 QUA fol) and available to access at the Library and Museum.

Other catalogued archives which may be useful for family history include the records of the children supported by the Royal Masonic Institution for Girls and the Royal Masonic Institution for Boys. Library and Museum staff can undertake searches from these records for you.

Geographical coverage

Freemasonry is organised in independent Grand Lodges covering various geographical areas. There are separate Grand Lodges for Scotland, Ireland, France and other European countries. In the USA each state has a separate Grand Lodge. The Library and Museum can provide contact details for masonic organisations in other countries. Please email the Enquiry Service on libmus@freemasonry.london.museum

Information on lodges and chapters and for local history

Online catalogue at <http://www.freemasonry.london.museum/catalogue.php> If you know the name of the lodge/chapter then you can search the online catalogue to see if we have a lodge or chapter history.

The Library and Museum holds a file for each lodge/chapter which is accessible for research on request. A lodge/chapter file may include summonses to meetings and correspondence.

Other archive material which may be consulted (Library and Museum staff can advise):

- Petitions to form new lodges (or chapters)
- Letter books (copies of letters sent by Grand Lodge administration)
- Minute books or proceedings of meetings of the Grand Lodge itself
- Correspondence arranged by province or district
- Annual returns

Lane's List of Lodges

This is an electronic resource which lists all lodges established by the United Grand Lodge and its predecessor bodies up to 2010. It is searchable by lodge name, lodge number or location. It is located on the Library and Museum website at <http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/lane/> . It is also available on the Connected Histories website at <http://www.connectedhistories.org/Default.aspx>

Masonic periodicals

For much of the 19th and early 20th centuries there were dedicated Masonic magazines which often contain details of lodge meetings, photographs of individuals, biographical information and obituaries. If you know key dates such as death or Masonic promotion then it can be worth looking at the periodicals (available in the Library and Museum) around that date for further information.

For a searchable database of masonic periodicals up to 1900 see Masonic Periodicals Online available via the Library and museum website or <http://www.masonicperiodicals.org/>

Lodge and Chapter Records

Some individual lodges have published historic material on the internet which should be accessible by usual search engines.

Lodges and chapters hold their own records. Requests for possible further information in those records can be forwarded via the Library and Museum who will advise on whether such an approach is likely to be worthwhile. Where records for some lodges and chapters that have closed are available, their records are listed on the catalogue and can be accessed in the Library and Museum. A small retrieval fee is payable as this material is stored off site. A list of lodge and chapter records deposited with local record offices is available on line at <http://freemasonry.london.museum/os/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/Lodge-and-Chapter-records-in-English-and-Welsh-Record-Offices.pdf>

Photographs

There is no complete record of photographs or images of individual members. More than 2,500 photographs of individual freemasons have been catalogued with biographical information so if an image is available for an individual there may be an entry on the Library and Museum catalogue (cataloguing is ongoing).

Any photograph you hold of an individual or group of individuals in regalia may help the Library and Museum identify the person/people concerned. Providing a copy with any search request may also help identify membership of other Masonic or fraternal orders (whose ceremonial costume is often similar to that of freemasons) for which contact details can be provided. For information about non-Masonic fraternal orders we recommend *Discovering Friendly and Fraternal Societies: their Badges and Regalia* by Victoria Solt Dennis (Shire Publications, ISBN 0747806284).

Costume (regalia), medals (jewels) and certificates

Where artefacts and documents relating to specific members are available there may be an entry on the Library and Museum catalogue. Such items which have survived in your family can also help identify the person concerned if details can be provided to the Library and Museum at the time of your enquiry.

Sources of information elsewhere

Sometimes wills, gravestones or local newspaper reports indicate that an individual was a freemason. Some records for lodges and chapters and other Masonic organisations may be deposited with local record offices and it is worth checking their catalogues and The National Archives' Discovery catalogue. Papers relating to the Masonic membership of individuals or included in the archives of other organisations may also be found via the Archives Hub search engine (<http://archiveshub.ac.uk>)