

THE LIBRARY AND MUSEUM OF FREEMASONRY

EXPLORING MASONIC RECORDS: ANTIENTS AND MODERNS

(Supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund)



(The illustrations are (clockwise from top right): Sir Francis Columbine Daniel, a founder of the Royal Masonic Institution for Boys and inventor of the portable life vest; a page from a membership register; an annual return; the first Minute Book, the first Book of Constitutions (1723) and a membership certificate)

Freemasonry is one of the world's oldest secular fraternal societies - a society concerned with moral and spiritual values. Members are taught the rules of Freemasonry by a series of ritual dramas that follow ancient forms and use stonemasons' customs and tools symbolically.

The Library and Museum of Freemasonry houses one of the finest collections of Masonic material in the world. It is open to the public, Monday to Friday, free of charge.

ARCHIVES

The Library and Museum is the repository for the archives of United Grand Lodge of England, the governing body of English freemasonry, and Supreme Grand Chapter. The United Grand Lodge was formed by a union of two rival Grand Lodges (the "Moderns", formed in 1717, and the "Antients", formed in 1751) in 1813. This leaflet provides an overview of the main archive sources available for the period before 1813. Many of these types of documents are also available for later periods.

Names and numbers of Masonic lodges. Almost all Masonic lodges today have a name and a unique number. In the eighteenth century not all lodges were named and the numbering of the lodges changed on at least seven occasions prior to 1813. To differentiate between lodges, a unique serial number, referred to as the SN number, has been assigned to each lodge established prior to 1863 (the date of the final number change) and is used throughout the Library and Museum collection to identify the lodges. The SN number can be obtained either from the copy of *Lane's Masonic Records 1717-1894* located at the Enquiry Desk in the Library and Museum or from the electronic version of the same database available on the Resources section of the website. It is helpful (but not essential) to quote this number in any enquiries.

Annual Returns (reference code GBR 1991 AR/) were compiled by individual lodges and sent to Grand Lodge from about 1768. These were used by the Grand Lodges to create registers of members. The type of information normally recorded is age, address,

and occupation of members and date of joining the lodge. The returns can also include additional correspondence commenting on local or national issues or personalities and petitions for charity.

Correspondence (reference code HC 1/ - HC 8/) exchanged between individual members (often figures prominent in local society) and Grand Lodge.

The catalogue for these two types of document is available on line at www.freemasonry.london.museum and on the Access to Archives website (www.a2a.org.uk) as part of the National Archives Network. The documents are available for consultation at the Library and Museum (see Visiting the Library and Museum).

Lodge Petitions Lodge petitions are produced when a group of Masons write to Grand Lodge for permission to form a new lodge. Some petitions have been lost or destroyed and there is currently no catalogue of holdings. However staff are happy to check the availability of such documents upon application.

Minute Books, Signature Books and Treasurers

Accounts Every lodge is obliged to maintain minutes of its meetings and is responsible for the safekeeping of these minutes. When a lodge ceases to meet the minutes and other lodge books are returned to the governing body. Some minute books have been lost or destroyed and there is currently no catalogue of holdings. However staff are happy to check the availability of such documents upon application.

Records of membership.

The information taken from Annual

Returns was used to compile membership registers. Membership Registers cannot be made available to individuals to conduct their own searches due to the conservation needs of the records. Membership Registers from 1768 to 1886 are available in digital format for public use at the Library and Museum. There are no publicly available indexes to individual names and requests to search for family history and genealogical information are available only by application to the Senior Assistant Librarian and Archivist on payment of a fee. The Library and Museum website includes details of fees and a copy of the genealogical search form. Returns of members made by lodges to the local Clerk of the Peace under the Unlawful Societies Act from 1799 to 1965 are generally available at local record offices and are not available at the Library and Museum.

Lodge Files. These files contain correspondence and ephemera such as summonses, press cuttings and letters.

The Library maintains a file for the majority of lodges, but there is currently no catalogue of holdings.

Lodge Histories The Library has a large collection of published histories relating to individual lodges. This collection is available on the catalogue at the Library and Museum website.

VISITING THE LIBRARY AND MUSEUM

Admission to the Library and Museum is free of charge. It is located on the first floor of Freemasons' Hall where there are also toilet facilities (including those for wheelchair users). There are lifts available which are suitable for most wheelchairs.

Please note that users are required to complete a Reader Registration Form and to provide proof of identity and address when they first use the Library or Archives. This can be completed on the occasion of a first visit.

To view archive material it is advisable to telephone in advance of any visit on 020 7395 9257 so that staff can have material available for you.

Power sockets for laptop computers are available A staffed service for photocopying and provided. Both are done at the discretion of the Librarian and are subject to copyright and conservation restrictions. For details of current charges please contact the Library and Museum on 020 7395 9257. Library staff are always pleased to help visitors with historical enquiries or to respond to telephone or written enquiries and can advise about how to use Library and Archive resources. However staff cannot undertake extensive research on individual enquiries. Freemasons' Hall is located on the edge of Covent Garden, where there are many cafes and restaurants. There are public car parks nearby.

LIBRARY

The Library is open for reference use. It contains a comprehensive collection of printed books and manuscripts on Freemasonry in England and Wales as well as material on Freemasonry elsewhere in the world and on subjects associated with Freemasonry or with mystical and esoteric traditions. The Library catalogue is available online at www.freemasonry.london.museum

MUSEUM

A changing series of exhibitions portray the history of Freemasonry in England and specific aspects of Masonic life. The permanent collections include pottery and porcelain, glassware, silver, furniture and clocks, Masonic jewels and regalia, prints, photographs and ephemera. A part of the Museum catalogue is available online at www.freemasonry.london.museum

TOURS OF FREEMASONS' HALL

The Library and Museum is located

in Freemasons' Hall. Guided tours of the building are generally available (free of charge) Monday to Friday. There are no tours on certain ceremonial occasions and visitors are advised to telephone before making a special journey. On Saturdays guided tours must be pre-booked (and a booking fee is payable). Please telephone for details

THE SHOP AT FREEMASONS' HALL

The shop stocks books, postcards, gifts and souvenirs about the history of freemasonry, the collections and Freemasons' Hall. Enquiries can be made on 020 7395 9329

OPENING TIMES

The Library and Museum is open from 10am to 5pm Monday to Friday except public holidays and the Christmas and New Year period.

Address

Freemasons' Hall
60 Great Queen Street
London
WC2B 5AZ

Telephone

020 7395 9257

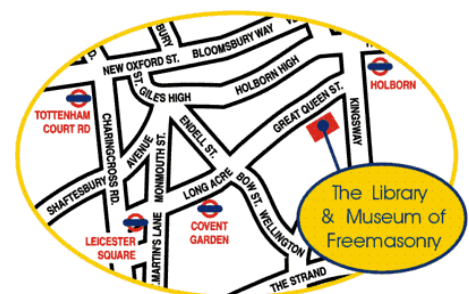
Fax

020 7404 7418

www.freemasonry.london.museum

Email

libmus@ugle.org.uk



The Library and Museum of Freemasonry is a registered charity no. 1058497

January 2004