

ROYAL LODGE (Atholl Lodges – A History up to now)

The GRAND LODGE OF ENGLAND (GLE) was formed in 1717 (as a result of a meeting in Apple Tree Tavern [Pub]) to exercise constitutional jurisdiction over the existing and future lodges which elected to operate under its purview. However, lodges took with them some measure of dissatisfaction in, and between lodges, into their new Institution. This dissatisfaction grew rapidly into estrangement and on July 17, 1751, approximately 80 (mainly Irish) Masons from 6 lodges within the GLE, disillusioned by the way in which (they perceived) Freemasonry was becoming “modernized”, formed a Committee to look into this.

The meeting was soon followed by the founding of the “Grand Lodge of England According to the Old Institutions” (GLE –AOI) – or Grand Lodge of the Antients. Hence the start of the incongruity of the “older” GLE being known as the “moderns” and the “younger” GLE –AOI as the “antients”. Their differences are illustrated in some of the accusations of “modernization” made by the –AOI against the GLE. But it should be borne in mind that the differences did not distinguish all “antients” from all “moderns”. In fact, there were “shades” of differences even within the Craft of Grand Lodges, which sometimes crossed the boundaries between GLs themselves. Furthermore, some of the accusations are unproved and some may even have been without foundation.

Some of these main accusations were, *inter alia*, that the “moderns”:

1. Transposed the modes of recognition in the First and Second Degrees
2. Omitted certain Prayers
3. De-christianised the Rituals (Anderson’s “Constitutions” of 1725 is offered as proof)
4. Ignored and neglected the Saints Days – especially St John’s Day (but then Royal, an Atholl lodge has been seen to be in breach re the St. John’s Day protocol!)
5. Omitted, in certain cases to prepare candidates in the customary way
6. Abbreviated the Ritual (e.g. omitted Lectures, etc)
7. Ceased to recite the Antient Charges at Initiation
8. Introduced austerity into the Ceremonies (e.g. excluded the wearing of swords)
9. Allowed the esoteric ceremony at Installation to fall into disuse
10. Departed from the antient method of arranging the lodge
11. Ignored the Deacons (“modern” lodges usually had no Deacons and until about 1809 their work was done by Stewards)
12. Did not recognize the Royal Arch as a “Fourth” Degree.

In fact, with regard to item 12 above, it should be noted that the premier GLE did not recognize the Royal Arch as part of Craft Freemasonry. They had no objection so long as it was considered separate from Craft Freemasonry. But the GLE-AOI regarded it as (a) Fourth Degree.

This was resolved rather artificially in the Articles of the Union (UGLE) of 1813, now incorporated as the Preliminary Declaration of the Book of Constitutions “..pure and Ancient Masonry consist of three degrees and no more, namely the Entered Apprentice, the Fellow Craft and the Master Mason, including the Supreme Order of the Holy Royal Arch”. The Royal Arch is now considered an integral part of English Freemasonry directly connected to the Craft but may be different in other Constitutions, e.g. Scottish Constitution where the two Orders are run on an entirely separate basis as the Grand Lodge of Scotland on the one hand and the Supreme Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Freemasons of Scotland on the other. Of course, they co-exist in a mutually amicable relationship.

The -AOI on its formation in 1751 was fortunate to have as its Secretary, Laurence Dermott, a successful Journeyman Painter, who had learned his freemasonry in Ireland (RWM Lodge #26 I.C in 1746.). One of his notable accomplishments was the writing of a Constitution for the -AOI which today still forms the basis of many GL Constitutions including those of North Carolina, South Carolina, Maryland, Georgia, Pennsylvania, Virginia, New York, Canadian Grand Lodge of Nova Scotia, etc.

Dermott was perceptive enough to realise that he needed persons of high social standing to give the -AOI status – much the same as the premier GLE was enjoying. Among those he persuaded were the 3rd and 4th Dukes of Atholl who were to serve the -AOI long, faithfully and well. John, the 3rd Duke was Installed as GM in 1771 and when he was elected Grand Master Mason of Scotland on 11/30/1773, he had the distinct honour of holding 2 Grand Masterships in the same year. **It was this influential position that brought about the soubriquet of “ATHOLL” Masons.**

John’s death in 1774 caused great consternation as it would not be easy to replace so illustrious a GM. Fortunately, he left an heir who inherited his title in 1775 in the capacity of 4th Duke of Atholl. He was 19 years old, but not yet a freemason, so when his application was received by the Grandmasters’ Lodge #1, he was Initiated there on 02/25/1775 when the 2nd and 3rd Degrees were then consecutively conferred on him. At the same meeting he was Installed as Master of the Lodge. At the next meeting of Grand Masters’ Lodge he was proposed as Grand Master of -AOI and Installed as such on 03/25/1775. This undoubtedly

remains the most meteoric rise ever recorded in the history of the Craft!! Over the next many years, freemasons on both sides of the 2 GLs worked tirelessly to remove the misunderstanding and enmity between the rivals, but none more so than both the 3rd and the 4th Dukes of Atholl, all of whose efforts happily ended in the Union (UGLE) of 1813.

Fast forward now from the Union (UGLE) of the 19th century (1813) to the beginning of the 21st century and we have the commencement of work to establish an Association of Atholl Lodges, with the aims and objectives “..to provide a focus for the common interest of the surviving Lodges which were warranted by the GLE – AOI (the Atholl Grand Lodge 1751-1813) ... and to preserve the Atholl heritage by fostering and promoting fraternal links between all Atholl Lodges, and other interested parties”.

It will be seen immediately that no lodge with a post-1813 Warrant of Formation can qualify for Full Membership. In fact, the last 3 are Duke of Normandy #245 (C.I. 04/29/1813), Union #247 (Guyana 07/28/1813 and Royal Union #246 (Gloucester 07/29/1813). Also it will be noted that at best Full Membership eligibility will be static and at worse, diminishing. At worst, the whole thing could fail. By my last count, 124 lodges are eligible for Full Membership - including our Royal #207 but excluding one which surrendered its Warrant and one which merged with another, both in 2005). The only other Atholl Lodge (apart from our Royal) in Jamaica is Friendly #239, here in Kingston.

There are 3 classes of Membership available, viz:

1. Atholl Lodges – Full Membership for Atholl Lodges of unbroken roots – Stg£ 15.00 per annum
2. Lodges with Atholl connections – Associate Membership for links with Atholls – Stg£ 15.00 p.a.
3. (a) Lodges with interest in Atholls – Affiliate Membership for co-operation – Stg£ 10.00 p.a.
(b) Individuals with interest in Atholls – Affiliate Membership for Research – Stg£ 5.00 p.a.

Fees indicated above are guaranteed for the next immediate 2 years. And it would appear that both Masons and non-Masons may obtain membership under 3 (b) above. Proponents hail the advent of the Association as a great way to recognize our heritage and obtain the prestige of this. Critics fear that the Association may herald the start of a schism which may take English Freemasonry back to the pre-1813 conflicts. I remain ambivalent, but on fine balance would opt for RL's Membership of the Association.

Our (*then – ed. note*) DGM, R.W. Bro. Afeef Lazarus (an Honorary Member of Royal Lodge) is listed as one of the (2) Vice Presidents of the Association. I respectfully

and fraternally congratulate him on his preferment in this regard and I am sure that you would associate with me in expressing this sentiment.

(This is a Paper, researched and delivered by W. Bro. L.L.(Laurie) Ventour, PDSGD, to the Royal Lodge, on March 06, 2006).