

# Robert Wentworth Little: A Duplicitous Freemason, Wordsmith and Mystic, Part I

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**I**N ENGLAND DURING THE PERIOD 1845 AND 1880 THERE WAS AN UNPRECEDENTED expansion in Freemasonry in general and the other orders of Freemasonry in particular. A small number of individuals can be identified as having played a disproportionate part in that development including Robert Wentworth Little (1838–78), a complex character who may aptly be described as a duplicitous Freemason, wordsmith and mystic. Notwithstanding some of his methodology his *curriculum vitae* is outstanding by any standards. He served as the Secretary of the Royal Masonic Institution for Girls (1872–8), was the first Provincial Grand Secretary and Scribe Ezra of the Craft Province of Middlesex (1870), was the prime mover and progenitor of the orders of the Red Cross of Constantine (RCC) in 1865 and, on the more esoteric wing of Freemasonry, Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia (SRIA) in 1867, the Ancient and Primitive

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Rite of Misraim (Misraim) in 1870, and the Ancient Archaeological Order of Druids (AAOD) in 1874. He played an active role in the formation of Royal and Select Masters (RSM) in 1871, supporting the recognition of the Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons (GLMMM) as a sovereign body, and was involved in the Royal Ark Mariner degree being taken under its protection in 1870. A poet and lyricist, he was a founder of the London (Masonic) Literary Union in 1871 and the first editor of the weekly newspaper *The Freemason* in 1869 and the magazine *The Rosicrucian* in 1868. All of these he had achieved by one means or another by the time of his untimely death from consumption at the young age of thirty-nine.

## Introduction

A fairly recent innovation in the English legal system has been the concept of ‘bad character evidence.’ That is defined as ‘evidence of or a disposition towards misconduct,’ which in the case of Little is, as will be shown, a propensity for being untruthful.<sup>1</sup> There is substantial evidence to demonstrate that Little had a considerable predisposition for inventing the truth to suit his own purpose. This is particularly pertinent with regard to the role he played in the establishment in England of the RCC, the SRIA, and Misraim. It also casts doubts on the veracity of the history of what is currently known about his early life up to 1862, evidence that is based on information provided entirely by him for articles such as that for ‘Masonic Portraits No. 18 The Mystic’ in *The Freemason’s Chronicle*<sup>2</sup> and then repeated as fact in later publications, not least in his obituary.<sup>3</sup>

James Gannon, author of ‘Masonic Portraits,’ claimed that Little arrived in London in 1855 and it is known that the property occupied by the Little family in Dublin was vacant by 1856.

Little and his mother appear on the April 1861 census return at the Hillingdon Militia Stores at Enfield Place and Elthorne Road, Uxbridge, noted by the enumerator as the home of Robert C. W. Little, Orderly Room Clerk, aged 22, born in Ireland and Jane Little, formerly Tavern Keeper, also born in Ireland.<sup>4</sup>

In May 1861 Little was initiated as Robert Wentworth Little (the first use of Wentworth as a middle name) in Royal Union Lodge No. 536 (382), Uxbridge, and his occupation listed as a clerk. He secured a position at Freemasons’ Hall, his first known

<sup>1</sup> *The Criminal Justice Act 2003*; KB Jackson, *The History & Origin of the Masonic and Military Order of the Red Cross of Constantine and the Orders of the Holy Sepulchre and of St. John the Evangelist* (London, Mark Masons’ Hall Limited, Sesquicentennial Edition 2015); TM Greensill, *History of the SRIA (Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia)*, (Privately Published by the SRIA, 1987)

<sup>2</sup> *The Freemason’s Chronicle*, 4 March 1876, 1

<sup>3</sup> *The Freemason*, 20 April 1878, 201.

<sup>4</sup> Census Returns of England and Wales, 1861. Kew, Surrey, England: The National Archives of the UK (TNA): Public Record Office (PRO), 1861, Class: RG 9; Piece: 766; Folio: 113; Page: 59; GSU roll: 542697



Fig. 1. Robert Wentworth Little c.1870

employment, through what appears to be an early example of his skill at networking and making use of friends and associates. Royal Albert Lodge No. 1209 (907), meeting in London, was consecrated on 9 April 1862. John Albert Farnfield became a member of the lodge on 9 May 1862 and his brother, William Henry Farnfield, on 15 December 1862. Little became a member the same day and immediately resigned from his mother lodge, Royal Union. The two brothers in question happened to be the sons of William Farnfield, Assistant Grand Secretary of UGLE 1854–66. In October 1862 Little, at the age of twenty-four, joined the staff at Freemasons' Hall as a clerk on an annual salary of £109 4s,<sup>5</sup> on which it remained until 1866 when it was increased to £135 a year.<sup>6</sup>

He enjoyed a successful career in both Craft and Royal Arch Masonry. Having been initiated in Royal Union Lodge No. 536 (382), he joined Royal Albert Lodge No. 907, London, and then promptly resigned from Royal Union. On 3 July 1863 he became a Founder of Rose of Denmark Lodge No. 975, London, and Master on 12 November that year. Exalted in Domatic Chapter No. 177, London, on 22 January 1863, he became a founder of Rose of Denmark Chapter No. 975, London, on 1 February 1865 and First

<sup>5</sup> *Minutes Quarterly Communications UGLE*, 3 December 1862, reported that the position of Percy Moss, a junior clerk in the Grand Secretary's office, had been declared vacant as result of his "having been for some time past under metal incapacity for the discharge of his duties". William Farnfield would have been aware of the situation and it seems that Little was appointed to fill this vacancy.

<sup>6</sup> *Minutes Quarterly Communications UGLE*, 7 March 1866

Principal on 3 March the following year. Thus within four years of his initiation he had become both a Past Master and Past First Principal.

Little's major influence and impact upon Masonry was the way in which he was instrumental in founding three Masonic orders, two of which, the RCC and SRIA, are still flourishing today. In 1865 Little founded in London the Red Cross of Constantine (RCC). In 1867 he was responsible for the establishment of the Rosicrucian Society of England [later restyled the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia (SRIA)], with a membership based largely on that of the RCC. He followed this up in 1869 by forming the Ancient and Primitive Rite of Misraim in London, an organization that may be described as both mystic and esoteric, with an initial membership once more drawn for the most part from that of the RCC.<sup>7</sup> Indeed as early as July 1869 there was an attempt made not only to restrict membership of the SRIA to those who were members of the RCC but also to suggest that RCC regalia be worn by those who were knights of the order at meetings of the SRIA.<sup>8</sup>

The RCC grew rapidly during Little's lifetime, and although it faltered somewhat after his death it still flourishes today with a membership in excess of 2,500 and with over 300 active conclaves throughout the world. The SRIA on the other hand was never envisaged by Little as a large scale enterprise and the original London College was originally formed with a maximum of 144 members in mind. Nonetheless the order has also continued to grow and prosper and today has some eighty-eight colleges worldwide. On the other hand Misraim, originally launched with some seventy members, never grew beyond the one unit of the Bective Sanctuary of Levites and disappeared from the Masonic scene almost as quickly as it had appeared.

The reasons for the success and failure of the three orders give an insight into Little's methodology and raise questions as to his integrity.

### Red Cross of Constantine (RCC)

According to the Minutes of Plantagenet Conclave No. 2, the first meetings of the Red Cross of Constantine, or self-styled Grand Council of The Imperial, Ecclesiastical and Military Order of the Knights of the Red Cross of Rome and Constantine, took place on 31 May 1865. The first entry of the original bound Minute Book of the conclave,<sup>9</sup> which is in Little's handwriting, refers to the initial meeting of the conclave held at 54 Great Ormond Street, the home of one of the founding members, William Henry Hub-

<sup>7</sup> Sources: *RCC: A Composite Sketch of the Early History of the Red Cross Order*, 1868, 49,50; *Imperial and Ecclesiastical and Military Order of Knights of the Red Cross of Rome and Constantine Annual Report of the Executive Committee for 1868-69, List of Officers and Conclaves* (London: Kenning, 1869); SRIA: *The Rosicrucian*, Vol. II No. 30, December 1873, 64; Rite of Misraim: *The Rosicrucian*, No. XI, January 1871, 136.

<sup>8</sup> Minutes, Rosicrucian Society of England, 8 July 1869

<sup>9</sup> Minute Book, Plantagenet Conclave No. 2, 31 May 1865 – 24 November 1884

bard. There were only seven brethren present: the five petitioners, Robert Wentworth Little, William Henry Hubbard, Henry Gustav Buss, Alfred Albert Pendlebury and Charles Payne; together with George Heyward Oliver, William Dodd – visitors from the ‘Original Conclave’ (later re-styled the Premier Conclave).

The Minutes record Little as being the Grand Recorder, Hubbard the Grand Treasurer, and Buss the Grand Almoner. In addition reference is made to the fact that the formation of the conclave had been authorized by a dispensation from the Grand Imperial Council. Little, Buss, Pendlebury, Dodd, and Payne were all employed at Freemasons’ Hall, the last named being the Grand Tyler. It is worth noting that Dodd did not join the staff at Freemasons’ Hall until 1866; indeed he had only been initiated into Freemasonry in the Phoenix Lodge No. 173 in January 1865, and raised in April,<sup>10</sup> having been passed by the Master, William Hubbard at the February meeting.<sup>11</sup> A further aspect linking Little, Hubbard, and Oliver is that all three were founder members of Rose of Denmark Chapter No. 975 on 4 March 1865, as was Buss, and Pendlebury who was exalted into the Chapter in the September later that same year.<sup>12</sup>

References made by Little on future occasions would infer that the first meeting of the Grand Imperial Council of the Red Cross of Rome and Constantine and the formation of the Original or Premier Conclave all took place on 31 May 1865 immediately prior to the formation of Plantagenet Conclave No. 2.<sup>13</sup> For those wishing to explore further the early years of the conclave and its relations with the Premier Conclave then the excellent paper by Dr John Hawkins is to be commended.<sup>14</sup>

Following the formation of Plantagenet Conclave in May 1865 it met, according to the Minute Book, on no less than seven further occasions in the next twelve months, during which time some thirty candidates were installed.<sup>15</sup> It would appear that the Premier Conclave also took in a similar number of candidates during the same period.

Little waited twelve months before the new order was announced in the Masonic press, when the anniversary assemblies of both Plantagenet Conclave and Premier Conclave were held on 22 May 1866 and 30 May 1866 respectively.<sup>16</sup> The reason for the delay was relatively straightforward; it enabled him to recruit an acceptable number of mem-

<sup>10</sup> *UGLE Membership Register*, Phoenix Lodge No. 173, Folio 174

<sup>11</sup> *Freemasons Magazine and Mirror*, February 1865, p10

<sup>12</sup> *UGLE Membership Register*, Rose of Denmark Chapter No. 975.

<sup>13</sup> *Freemasons Magazine and Mirror*, 10 October 1868, 269; *Annual Report 1871-72 The Masonic & Military Order of Knights of Rome and of the Red Cross of Constantine*, (London: Kenning, 1873), 36.

<sup>14</sup> J. W. Hawkins, *The Origins and Early History of Plantagenet Conclave TI of the Masonic and Military Order of the Red Cross of Constantine and the Appendant Orders of the Holy Sepulchre and of St. John the Evangelist*, 2015 – Library and Museum of Freemasonry BE 617 (2) HAW

<sup>15</sup> The Minutes of Plantagenet Conclave list meetings being held on: 31 May 1865, 11 August 1865, 22 August 1865, 24 October 1865, 28 November 1865, 30 January 1866, 27 March 1866 and 22 May 1866.

<sup>16</sup> *Freemasons Magazine and Mirror*, 9 June 1866, 16, 17.

bers in the intervening twelve months and also helped gloss over the fact that the initial meeting took place with the assistance of colleagues from Freemasons' Hall roped in for the purpose of giving some credibility to the proceedings. Having served their purpose, Pendlebury, Dodd, and Payne are omitted from the list of knights by seniority published in 1868.<sup>17</sup>

Little maintained that he had been responsible for reviving the order in 1865 rather than forming it from scratch, and in order to substantiate that claim he invented a fictitious history that is quite incredible and cannot be substantiated by any documentary evidence.<sup>18</sup> As early as December 1866 Little attempted to put forward a connection between Freemasonry and the orders of chivalry and that the Red Cross,<sup>19</sup> professing to trace its origin from the equestrian order of ancient Rome.<sup>20</sup>

His reasons for doing so were to achieve instant respectability for the RCC as a long-standing Masonic, military and religious order of chivalry. By doing so he could also claim that the RCC was included in the permissive clause relating to orders of chivalry in Article II of the Union of 1813.<sup>21</sup> A resumé and timeline of the history of the order Little invented appeared in the very first published annual report of the RCC in 1869 entitled 'Memorabilia of the Order'; that was repeated in each successive publication until at least 1905. It also included a 'Declaration of Principles' supposed to have been written in 1806 by Waller Rodwell Wright that conveniently states amongst other things that 'The Order of the Red Cross'<sup>22</sup> is one of those numerous branches of chivalry which had its origin in the Holy Wars . . . ' Also included in each of the annual publications was a statement by John Hervey, the Grand Secretary of UGLE from 1868 to 1879:

I hereby certify that the Manuscript of which the above is a verbatim extract, is one of the documents relating to the Red Cross Order which were found in the archives of the Grand Lodge of England, and handed over at the command of the Right Honourable the Earl of Zetland, P.G.M., then M.W. Grand

<sup>17</sup> *A Composite Sketch of the Early History of the Red Cross Order*, 'Original or premier Conclave of England. Roll of Knights by Seniority', London, 1868, 49, 50.

<sup>18</sup> Between 1 December 1866 and 10 October 1868 Little publishes a series of articles in the *Freemasons Magazine and Mirror* about the history of the Red Cross of Constantine that were consolidated into *A Composite Sketch of the Early History of the Red Cross Order* published in London in 1868.

<sup>19</sup> The use of the phrase 'Red Cross' is significant. There are a number of orders in Free Masonry that have the suffix 'Red Cross' by way of example: Red Cross of Babylon, Red Cross of Rome and Constantine, Red Cross of Jerusalem, Red Cross of Palestine. Little is very judicious in his use of the phrase 'Red Cross' whenever it suits him he omits the affix 'Red Cross of Constantine' (RCC) in order to mislead the reader into thinking that he is referring to the RCC when in fact nothing could be further from the truth. Reference will be made to this particular footnote on each particular instance.

<sup>20</sup> *Freemasons Magazine and Mirror*, 1 December 1866, 422, 433

<sup>21</sup> *The Rosicrucian*, No. III January 1869, 39 - "The Knights Templar; the Knights of the Red Cross and K.H.S., were the only organised Chivalric Orders existing in England at the time of the Union of 1813, and consequently the above permissive clause applies solely to their members."



Master, to Lord Kenlis, the Head of the Order of the Red Cross in England.  
John Hervey (P.S.G. Deacon) Grand Secretary of the United Grand Lodge of  
England. Freemasons' Hall London 1st September 1870.<sup>22</sup>

Little was very clever in trying to suggest that the RCC was a continuation of the Red Cross headed by Wright and even more sharp in implicating Hervey's predecessor as Grand Secretary of UGLE, William Henry White, as being not only being a member of the that order back in 1809, but also being elected as Grand Sovereign of the RCC in 1865. These papers can be found in the archives of Mark Masons' Hall, where they are known as the 'Zetland Papers',<sup>23</sup> and include two sets of handwritten rituals, dated 1806, for the Red Cross of **Palestine**, not Constantine. It should be added that they bear no resemblance whatsoever to the ritual of the RCC. The lack of affix in both the Declaration and the statement by Hervey, means that whilst both are technically correct insofar as they refer to the *Red Cross*, they are disingenuous to say the least.

The other issue that may be conveniently dealt with at this stage is the innocent part played by William Henry White. The first public reference to his election as Grand Sovereign of the RCC is not made until the newspaper article of 9 June 1866,<sup>24</sup> which is very convenient, given that White, who retired as Grand Secretary of UGLE in 1857,<sup>25</sup> died on 5 April 1866 at the age of 89.<sup>26</sup> There is no record of his election or attendance at any meetings in this period, which is not surprising given his age, and on the balance of probabilities White knew nothing of how his name had been misrepresented and of course could not be questioned by others after the event owing to his sad demise.

Little's attempt to claim a greater antiquity for the RCC is by no means unique. It is a trait shared by other Masonic degrees and orders, not least the Craft; in the first *Book of Constitutions* of 1723, in an attempt to increase its kudos and standing, it appears to lay claim to a history dating back to the ancient Egyptians and Greeks. An alternative stratagem as with the RCC is to maintain that the degree in question had been 'revived'

<sup>22</sup> *The Freemason*, 29 April 1871, 270; *Annual Report 1870-71 The Masonic & Military Order of Knights of Rome and of the Red Cross of Constantine* (London: Kenning, 1871), 14.

<sup>23</sup> The 'Zetland Papers' include a note that states 'Red Cross of Constantine/Important papers given up by Order of Lord Zetland, Gd. Mas. To the Earl of Bective, Gd. Sov: of the Order/1869 or 1870'. The papers consist of correspondence, minutes of the meetings of the High Council of the Order, and perhaps most relevant two sets of ritual labelled Red Cross of Palestine Ritual A and B respectively. The papers appear to cover the period 1806 to 1813, and the rituals that are dated 1806 are, according to an annotation by John Hamill dated 1977, in the handwriting of Waller Rodwell Wright.

<sup>24</sup> *Freemasons Magazine and Mirror*, 9 June 1866, 16

<sup>25</sup> William Henry White (19 November 1777-5 April 1866). Appointed joint Grand Secretary of the Moderns or Premier Grand Lodge, with his father in 1810; and as joint Grand Secretary of UGLE with William Harper from 1813 until 1838. He was the sole Grand Secretary of UGLE from 1838 until his retirement at the age of eighty in 1857. His membership of other Orders included the Knight Templar, Rose Croix, and according to his obituary, op. cit., the Red Cross under Waller Rodwell Wright.

<sup>26</sup> *Freemasons Magazine and Mirror*, 15 April 1866, 295.

rather than invented, into which category fall the Royal Ark Mariner (1871), Operatives (1913) and Knight Templar Priests (1924).<sup>27</sup>

The difference in this instance is the duplicitous way in which Little went about fabricating not only the history of the RCC but also its ritual. One thing that all Masonic degrees have in common is that they are all invented. All Masonic ritual, including the Craft, is completely fabricated, and was the creation of some very imaginative word-smiths. In that regard the Red Cross of Constantine is no exception, save that Little contrived to maintain that he found copies of the ritual in the basement of Freemasons' Hall rather than acknowledge that fact that they were the results of his own imagination and pen.<sup>28</sup>

There is little doubt that the ritual of the Red Cross of Constantine was derived from William Finch. Finch described himself as a printer and bookseller, but made his living by devising and selling Masonic rituals as well as conferring them, as his marketing material makes clear:

Private instruction as usual by W. Finch, in all 39 degrees. Exaltation in all the afore-said Degrees, either privately, or at the Chapter and Conclave of Universality.' As early as 1812 he was advertising for sale the ritual for 'The Red Cross of Rome and Constantine. This is the first of the Christian degrees, and a very noble introduction to the Knights, Templar, &c. By this degree we perceive the great impropriety of introducing in the Templars, (without defining its origin, &c.) I.H.S.V.

His prices for ritual varied from 5s to £2. 2s with 'Certificates and Summonses at various prices.' He remains silent on the cost of awarding and conferring the different degrees.<sup>29</sup>

Finch and Richard Carlile were well known to each other,<sup>30</sup> and a copy of the ritual of the Red Cross of Rome and Constantine appeared as an exposure in Carlile's publication *The Republican* in 1825,<sup>31</sup> and later in three parts as the *Manual of Freemasonry*, published initially in 1831 and subsequently in one volume in 1845,<sup>32</sup> following his death

<sup>27</sup> J. S. Wade (ed.), *Reflections on 300 Years of Freemasonry*, London, RL Gan, 'The Full Spectrum of Freemasonry', 219.

<sup>28</sup> The Order of the Red Cross of Constantine comprises of three distinct sets of ritual: Knight of the Red Cross of Constantine, and the two Appendant Orders of: Knight of the Holy Sepulchre and Novice and Knight of St John the Evangelist. The two Appendant orders are composed of three parts or Points. The 1st and 2nd Points constitute the Knight of the Holy Sepulchre (KHS) and the 3rd Point that of St John the Evangelist. There are further ceremonies for the enthronement of the Sovereign of a conclave and the installation of the Viceroy or Eusebius of a conclave, the latter being a necessary step to be taken prior to being enthroned as Sovereign.

<sup>29</sup> William Finch, *Advertising Flysheet*, Printer and Bookseller, No. 5 Charlotte Place, New Cut, Lower marsh, Lambeth, opposite the Gardens, and between the Pear tree and Spanish Patriot Public Houses, 20 January 1812, Library and Museum of Freemasonry, London

<sup>30</sup> F. M. Ricard, 'William Finch', *AQC* No. 55, 1942, 175

<sup>31</sup> R. Carlile, *The Republican*, No. 15 Vol 12, 14 October 1825, 455-459

<sup>32</sup> R. Carlile, *Manual of Freemasonry*, 1845, 290-294



in 1843. Notwithstanding the Carlile connection, Little, who had a considerable library, was himself familiar with work of Finch. The Library and Museum of Freemasonry in London have a number of works by Finch that were previously owned by Little.<sup>33</sup> One of Little's major supporters, with whom he was in regular correspondence, was Francis George Irwin,<sup>34</sup> who was the leading founder in both the RCC and SRIA in the West Country, where he lived. In a letter dated 29 December 1869 from Little to Irwin in response to a request for a copy of the RCC ritual he writes: 'Kt. of Con. Ritual I regret I cannot lay my hand on at present – but it is quite safe & when I clear out my labyrinth of books & papers I will send it off at once.'<sup>35</sup> Little must have eventually found the ritual in question, because in the archives of the Library and Museum of Freemasonry in London there is the manuscript copy transcribed by Irwin from the original provided by Little.<sup>36</sup> While the contents bear no resemblance whatsoever to the ritual of the Red Cross of Palestine found in Freemasons' Hall, it most certainly mirrors the version published by Carlile and indeed the printed version published by Lewis Masonic in 1877.<sup>37</sup>

Insofar as the respective rituals of the Knight of the Holy Sepulchre and that of Novice and Knight of St John the Evangelist are concerned, Arturo de Hoyos<sup>38</sup> has shown that Little used as his main source ritual devised by James H. C. Miller, an American purveyor of various Masonic degrees that included Knights of the Holy Sepulchre, which were exposed in David Bernard's anti-Masonic book *Light on Masonry* published in 1829.<sup>39</sup> An examination of one particular aspect of the respective texts used for the ritual of Novice and Knight of St John the Evangelist (KHS)<sup>40</sup> provides compelling proof

<sup>33</sup> Two examples being W. Finch, *An appeal to the officers and members of the Grand Lodge of the Ancient and Honourable Society of Freemasons: likewise to those who are not masons*, London, 1807?, Previous owner Little, BE 810 FIN and W. Finch, *List of the United Lodges, Ancient and Modern and also a list of Scotch lodges, etc.: supplement to the union lectures* (London, 1815), Former owner Little, BE 810 FIN

<sup>34</sup> Francis George Irwin, (19 June 1828 - 26 July 1893). Having retired from the army, he settled in the West Country. An enthusiastic Freemason, he was a founding member in many orders, including: Ancient and Accepted Rite - first Sovereign of St. Aubyn Chapter, No. 20, Plymouth; Allied Masonic Degrees - St. Aubyn's Council (now No. 33), Devonport; Knights Templar - the first Preceptor William Stuart Encampment, No. 61, Aldershot; RCC – Rose and Lilly Conclave No. 10, Weston-Super-Mare, 1868; SRIA – Bristol College, 1869. He was particularly interested in becoming a member and exploring the rituals of the orders of Freemasonry beyond the Craft. His voluminous correspondence, with others sharing a similar interest, are to be found in the Library and Museum of Freemasonry in London.

<sup>35</sup> Manuscript letter from R. W. Little to Francis Irwin, dated 29 December 1868, Library and Museum of Freemasonry.

<sup>36</sup> *Ritual of the Knight of the Red Cross of Rome and Constantine*, manuscript/transcribed by Francis George Irwin, Library and Museum of Freemasonry, BE 618/1 RIT.

<sup>37</sup> *The Perfect Ceremonies of the Knights of Rome and Constantine* (London: Lewis Masonic, 1877), Library and Museum of Freemasonry, BE 618/1 PER.

<sup>38</sup> A de Hoyos, *Heredom*, Vol. 8, 1999-200, 'The Posthumous Success of James H.C. Miller, Degree Peddler', 210-17.

<sup>39</sup> D Bernard, *Light on Masonry*, Utica, 1829.

<sup>40</sup> Best illustrated by comparing page 548 of D. Bernard, *Light on Masonry* (Utica, 1829) and pages 11 and 12 of R. W. Little, K.H.S. 3rd point: Novice & Knt. of St John the Evangelist, [manuscript], c. 1860, Library and

of Little's deception. Bernard, in quoting an extensive piece of ritual, misses out a whole section, on the grounds that he feels that it would be uninteresting to his readers. Little makes his version continuous completely ignoring and overlooking the fact that there is a complete section missing.

There are a number of reasons for the undeniable success of the RCC, apart from having a titled ruler at its head, together with a small group of effective and skilled leading members. Above all it struck the right Masonic chord. Following the death of the Duke of Sussex in 1843 there was a rapid expansion of a number of Masonic orders and degrees beyond the Craft in general and those whose membership was restricted to those professing the Christian faith in particular.<sup>41</sup> The RCC was undoubtedly part of that trend. Little was very astute in his *modus operandi*; this involved using trusted lieutenants to act as agents on his behalf to establish conclaves of the order not only in England but worldwide. The rapid expansion is illustrated in **Figure 2** and **Figure 3** as is their ultimate dependence on Little, after whose death in 1878 there is a discernable decline which is only ameliorated over a considerable period of time.

It is ironic that the RCC flourished and continues to flourish despite, rather than because of, Little's attempt to deceive the Masonic world, and indeed nearly floundered in its early years because of his pretensions of it being an ancient civil and religious order. In more recent times examples can be given of at least two Masonic orders that have appeared on the scene and flourished, neither of which have found it necessary to invent a fictitious history to enhance their popularity and development – one a genuine revival and the other a new creation.<sup>42</sup> This is in stark contrast to the position taken by Little in establishing the RCC by inventing a fictitious origin and history, and illustrates that a long-standing history is not necessarily a requirement for Masonic success.

Museum of Freemasonry, London, BE 618/1 LIT.

<sup>41</sup> J. S. Wade (ed.), *Reflections on 300 Years of Freemasonry*, London, RL Gan, 'The Full Spectrum of Freemasonry', 222–5.

<sup>42</sup> The Order of the Scarlet Cord, an appendant order to that of the Secret Monitor (OSM) was formed in 1889 at first and was very successful but soon floundered and went into abeyance in 1929. It was revived in 2004 by senior members of the OSM and is currently administered from Mark Masons' Hall in London. An order which was introduced in the USA in the 1930s. One that he wrote himself in 1931 was that of the 'Anointed King' - an expansion and explanation of the installation ceremony of the Thrice Illustrious Master of a Council of Royal and Select Masters. The Grand Council, of Royal and Select Masters of North Carolina adopted the degree in 1932, as in due course did most of the Cryptic Grand Councils in the USA. The Grand Council of New York, obtained in 1943 a Charter from North Carolina to work the degree that is also variously known as 'The Thrice Illustrious Masters Degree' and 'Order of The Secret Trowel'. In August 2008 a small delegation from England travelled to Albany in the State of New York to have the degree conferred, following which the Cryptic Grand Council of North Carolina was pleased to grant a Charter, dated 10 November 2008, to the Grand Council of Royal and Select Masters of England and Wales to enable it to carry out the degree.. The popularity of the degree is such that a limit has had to be put on the number of Past Masters of the RSM being eligible to receive it each year.

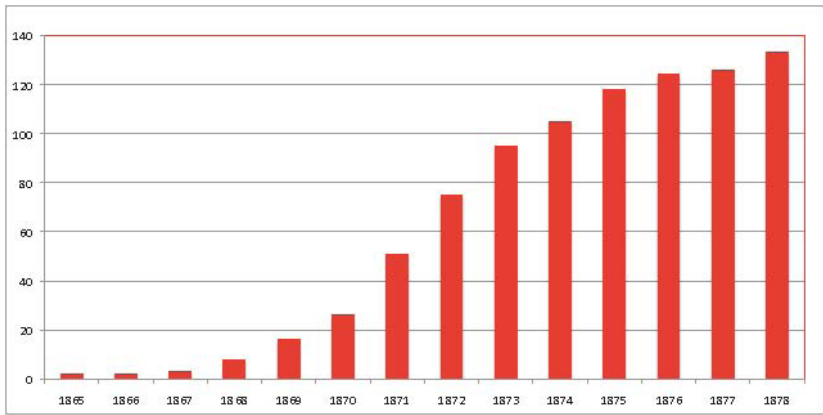


Fig. 2. Red Cross of Constantine Conclaves Consecrated 1865 to 1878

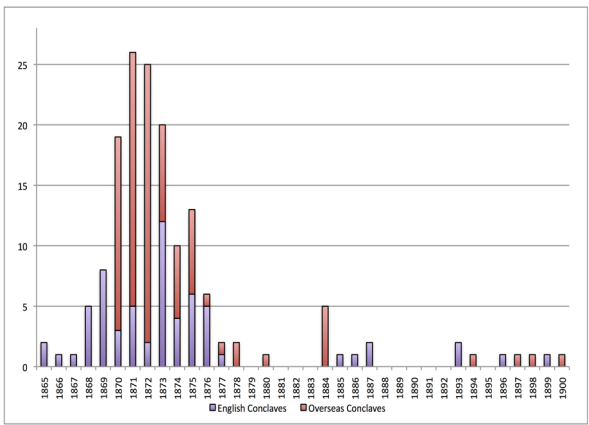


Fig. 3. Red Cross of Constantine Conclaves Consecrated 1865 to 1900

### Rosicrucian Society of England – SRIA

A little over two years after founding the Red Cross of Constantine (RCC) Little was very much involved in formation in 1867 of the Rosicrucian Society of England, which long after the death of Little adopted the Latinized title of the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia (SRIA) in 1885. For the sake of convenience henceforth in this paper the order is referred to as SRIA. There are no obvious reasons for Little wishing to become involved in the world of Rosicrucianism, let alone his desire to link it inextricably to the RCC that he had formed two years previously.

The ritual basis of the SRIA can in part be traced back to the German fraternity of the Golden and Rosy Cross of the mid-eighteenth century adapted by Hermann Fichtuld. It consists of nine degrees or grades: Zelator (I), Theoricus (II), Practicus (III), Philosophus (IV), Adeptus Minor (V), Adeptus Major (VI), Adeptus Exemptus (VII), Magister (VIII) and Magi (IX).<sup>43</sup>

In 1867 Little had in his possession four manuscript rituals for the First, Second, Fifth and Sixth Grades, that had been translated into English probably from the German. Little maintained to have discovered the rituals, which are not dated, but are annotated with the words 'Freemasons' Hall', in Freemasons' Hall in London, where he was employed in the office of the Grand Secretary. The rituals are still in existence and are to be found in the archives of the SRIA and are very similar to the current ritual observed by the society. Also in the archives of the society are early copies made from the 'Little's Original' by Capt. F. G. Irwin in 1869 and C. F. Matier in 1872.<sup>44</sup>

Anthony Oneal Haye (1838–77) was until his resignation in 1865 the editor of *The Scottish Freemasons' Magazine* which ran from 1863 to 1866, and at the time of his premature and tragic death in 1877 the editor of the *Govan Chronicle* newspaper. In 1866 he was also the head, or Magus, of the Rosicrucian Society of Scotland based in Edinburgh, which had been in existence since at least 1857.<sup>45</sup> The society was not Masonic in nature but a number of the members, including Haye himself, were Freemasons. Little, Haye, and William James Hughan (1841–1911) were all regular contributors to *The Freemasons' Magazine and Masonic Mirror*. Hughan, although living and active in Freemasonry in south-west England, was exalted into the Royal Arch in Glasgow Chapter No. 50 in 1865. It seems most likely that all three were known to each other and certainly Hughan knew Haye and thought highly of him.<sup>46</sup> It is through their connection with Haye that Little and Hughan travelled to Edinburgh, where on 31 December they were both received into the Rosicrucian Society in the Grade of Zelator. A photograph of 'Early Scottish Rosicrucians' includes Haye, Little and Hughan.<sup>47</sup> See Fig. 4.

<sup>43</sup> The terminology used by the Scottish Society, The Rosicrucian Society of England prior to 1868 and the SRIA is such that both Arabic and Roman numerals are both used from time to time, as well as the terms degree and grades but does not materially affect the general principle involved.

<sup>44</sup> Alistair Lees, of the SRIA, has been remarkably helpful and of great assistance in the preparation of this paper, not only in terms of making original records and documents accessible but also clarifying a number of points through private correspondence and discussion. It is hoped that the recent discovery of a number of previously unknown documents will enable Alistair to write a comprehensive and more accurate history of the Order than has previously been possible.

<sup>45</sup> Walter Spencer's Lecture Book found in the Archives of the SRIA in 2015 has part of four degrees in the back and the date 1857, when he was admitted into the Scottish society; the same year as Haye who was then aged 19.

<sup>46</sup> *Freemasons Magazine and Masonic Mirror*, 10 November 1866, 362

<sup>47</sup> M. Allen, *History of the SRIS Metropolitan College*, 1923. A.M. Lees has identified from secondary sources six of the twenty-two members in the photograph, including Haye, Little and Hughan.



Fig. 4. Members of the Rosicrucian Society of Scotland. R. W. Little (centre back row with bowler hat); W. J. Hughan (centre back row with top hat); Anthony Oneal Haye (front row centre kneeling)

On 1 June 1867 the first meeting of the Rosicrucian Society of England took place at the George Hotel in Aldermanbury, London, with Little in the chair as Master-General, together with five other members, including Henry Buss and Alfred Pendlebury, both of whom it will be recalled were colleagues of Little in the Grand Secretary's office.<sup>48</sup> The handwritten ritual used in Scotland on 31 December was copied by both Little and Hughan, each of which are annotated 'adjusted by A. O. Haye 12 January 1866'.<sup>49</sup> It is this ritual that was brought back by Little from Edinburgh.

It seems that Little had already decided at this very early stage to limit membership of the society to Freemasons. A month after the initial meeting on 1 June 1867 a notice appeared in the Masonic press advising that 'the English branch of the Rosicrucian is now in full vigour, and every information can be obtained by Master Masons . . .'.<sup>50</sup> At the second meeting of the English society on 31 October 1867, at which nine members were present, it was agreed 'that the Scottish ritual be adopted, subject to certain verbal alterations and omissions at the discretion of the Celebrant'.<sup>51</sup> What then appears to have happened is that the 'Scottish' ritual was immediately amended to that originally discovered by Little, which in turn appears to have been the basis of the ritual that Haye had used in the first place in order to 'adjust' to produce the 'Scottish' ritual. By the following July a revised set of 'Rules and Ordinances', no doubt written by Little,

<sup>48</sup> Minutes of the Rosicrucian Society of England, 1 June 1867

<sup>49</sup> Archives of the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia

<sup>50</sup> *Freemasons Magazine and Masonic Mirror*, 13 July 1867, 27

<sup>51</sup> Minutes of the Rosicrucian Society of England, 31 October 1867. The Celebrant presides over a Rosicrucian College in a similar manner to that of a Master of a Masonic Lodge.

were published in the July 1868 issue of *The Rosicrucian*, which included the preamble: 'The Brethren of the Rosy Cross is totally independent, being established on its own basis, and as a body is no otherwise connected with the Masonic Order than having its members selected from that fraternity.'<sup>52</sup> No record exists of the revised Rules and Ordinance having been formally approved. There are no Minutes contained in the Minute Book for the meeting that took place on 9 July 1868 – just the date and a blank page sandwiched between the Minutes of 9 May 1868 and 8 October 1868.

Notwithstanding the short agenda published in the October issue of *The Rosicrucian* – 'To Confirm Minutes; to enrol candidates; to confer the Rite of Perfection on approved Members' – the actual Minutes of 8 October 1868 record a very different and eventful meeting, with six members receiving the 'Rite of Perfection' (i.e. the First Grade appears to have been carried out) and a considerable number of members being 'declared' (i.e. in name only with no actual ritual ceremony) in the various Grades of the Order: II – 5 members (including four who had just received the First Grade; III – 4 members; IV – 3 members; V – 2 members; VI – 1 member; VII – 3 members; VIII – 5 members; IX – 1 member, R. W. Little. The Minutes also include a definitive list of officers with Robert Wentworth Little heading the list for the first time as Supreme Magus and Master General, SM & MG.

The recipient of the IX Grade at that October meeting was none other than Little himself, notwithstanding that he is shown in the Golden Book as having already received the IX in Scotland on 1 June 1867 – 'From Scott. Br.' [sic]; (the day of the first meeting of the Rosicrucian Society of England in London – hence presumably, in absentia), and already having previously declared himself IX Grade and Supreme Magus at the meeting of the English Society held on 9 May 1868. A real belt and braces exercise.

Previous histories of the SRIA<sup>53</sup> have given details of the dates that both Little and Hughan were understood to have taken the nine grades in Scotland. This information appears to have been taken from the 'The Golden Book' of the society, a chronological register of all members of the society from its inception. The dates insofar as they relate to Little and Hughan are all in the same hand and appear to have all been written on the same occasion.<sup>54</sup> There are inconsistencies that have never been satisfactorily explained: for example why does Hughan appear to have departed from Edinburgh before com-

<sup>52</sup> *The Rosicrucian*, July 1868, 6-9

<sup>53</sup> T.M. Greensill, *History of the S.R.I.A. (Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia)*, Privately Published, London, 1987

<sup>54</sup> Table showing the supposed chronology of Little and Hughan receiving the Grades of the Order from the Rosicrucian Society of Scotland.

	Little	Hughan
31 December 1866	1° 2°	1° 2°
4 February 1867	3° 4° 5°	3°
6 March 1867		4° 5° 6°
18 May 1867	6° 7° 8°	
1 July 1867	9°	7°



pleting the Fourth and Fifth Grades and how and why was Little apparently admitted in the Ninth Grade by Scotland, in absentia. Although the early Minutes of the English Rosicrucian Society refer to Little as MG – Master General,<sup>55</sup> at the meeting of 9 May 1868 he promoted himself not only as Supreme Magus but also as together with James Hughan and Henry Hubbard as Ninth Grade.<sup>56</sup> In the Scottish Society Haye was only acknowledged as Magus Maximus. A further but significant inconsistency that has never been previously adequately explained relates to the warrant granted to Hughan by the Scottish society on 15 July 1867.

Warrant to William James Hughan Zel: Ros: Scot: to receive such gentlemen as, after submission to the Grand Council, by them deemed eligible. Given at Edinburgh in the Grand Council assembled this fifteenth day of July Eighteen hundred and sixty-seven years. A. Oneal Haye, Magus Max. Ros. Soc. Scot. J.H. Bairnsfather, Sec. <sup>57</sup>

From this it seems clear that the original intention of Haye and the Scottish society was for a subordinate unit of the society to be formed in England, and presumably this was the reason why Little and Hughan went to Edinburgh in the first instance. Within a year of being inducted into the Scottish society Little had subverted its English branch into an independent body with himself at its head.

The public reaction from Haye was to have published a most revealing letter in *The Freemasons' Magazine and Masonic Mirror* in the December of that year.<sup>58</sup> It was revealing in two respects. First, Haye unequivocally disassociates himself from Little's London Rosicrucian Society '... there is no connexion between the Rosicrucian Society and Freemasonry ...' and also makes the very pointed remarks that his own Scottish society does not charge fees or place a restriction on numbers. Secondly, he lists S. Bairnsfather, J.H.M. Bairnsfather, Dr Dickson, Frank L. Law and R. W. Little as Masons who are members of the First Grade; he maintains that only Bros Hughan and D. Murray Lyon have been promoted to the Second Grade. In addition he stresses that a year should elapse between every step and that very few attain the Fourth Grade and that it had taken him eleven years to achieve his present position, presumably as Magus.

<sup>55</sup> The term Master General is thought to be the Scottish equivalent of Provincial Grand Master or Chief Adept – the term used later by the SRIA – for the head of a Province. Similarly the term 'Substitute' is still used in Scottish Freemasonry to denote what in England would be 'Assistant'.

<sup>56</sup> Minutes of the Rosicrucian Society of England, 9 May 1868, 'Robert Wentworth Little SM & MG declared the 9° complete & consisting of himself as Supreme Magus & MWMG [Most Worshipful Master General] Frater Wm. James Hughan as Senior Substitute Magus and R.W. Deputy MG & Frater Wm. Henry Hubbard as Junior Substitute Magus and V.W. Primus Ancient.'

<sup>57</sup> At the time of writing the Warrant may be found on display at the Headquarters of the SRIA in Hampstead, London.

<sup>58</sup> *Freemasons Magazine and Masonic Mirror*, 12 December 1868, 471

Certainly by the time of the first meeting of the English Rosicrucian society on 1 June 1867, and most likely before his initial visit to Edinburgh, Little had in his possession copies of the English rituals for the I, II, V and VI Grades. The SRIA were not in possession of a full set of rituals for all grades I to IX until 1887.<sup>59</sup> This explains in part why only the grades listed above could be conferred and the others had to be 'declared'. As has been shown there are also instances when Grades II, V and VI have been 'declared', presumably an issue relating to time constraints and copies of the ritual not being readily available. The rituals were all in manuscript form and would have had to be painstakingly copied from the original. The usual practice, as demonstrated by Little and Hughan following their admission into the First Grade in Scotland, and as detailed above, was to have made their own copies of the ritual in which they had just undertaken. This begs the question as to why, if Little had, as he maintains, taken the other grades in Scotland, did he not make copies of the rituals there and then. The reason is of course that he never did take the other grades, other than the First, confirmed by Haye in his letter of 12 December 1868. Haye makes the point in his letter that one year should elapse between each grade so he would hardly have countenanced Little being granted all nine grades within a period of only six months. It also helps to explain the discrepancies between the apparent receipt of the grades by Hughan and Little. If Haye is to be believed, and there is no reason as to why he should not, then Hughan did go to Edinburgh on one future occasion to receive the Second Grade and it may also explain why he, and not Little, was charged with the warrant to establish a branch of the order in England. Hughan would have been aware that he had been made Ninth Grade and Substitute Supreme Magus by Little on 9 May 1868, but there is absolutely no reason to suppose that he knew or was even aware that Little had manipulated the records that show that the two of them had taken the Grades II to VIII of the order in Scotland, since the only record of them doing so is contained in the Golden Book. In conclusion the evidence is that Little received nothing other than the First Grade of the order in Scotland and that he 'bestowed' on himself the remaining eight, albeit that he had access to four of the grades, the rituals of which he had found in Freemasons' Hall or elsewhere – but this is of no direct consequence.

Hughan does not appear to have taken issue with Little over usurping his authority in establishing the English branch of the Rosicrucians. Hughan accepted the office of Substitute Supreme Magus, even though the records show that he only ever attended three meetings of the society, the last of which was in 1870, and that he resigned as Substitute Supreme Magus in 1876.<sup>60</sup> Hughan did however continue to contribute positive

<sup>59</sup> Personal correspondence with A.M. Lees of the SRIA: W.S. Hunter of the Societas Rosicruciana of Scotland presented a complete set of bound typed rituals to the SRIA in 1887.

<sup>60</sup> Minutes of the Rosicrucian Society of England, 14 January 1869; 8 July 1869 and 14 June 1870.

articles for publication in *The Rosicrucian*.<sup>61</sup> In addition he wrote articles and letters in support of Little when the latter was under attack regarding his involvement with the Red Cross of Constantine.<sup>62</sup> Although Hughan appears generally supportive of the RCC, he took exception to the attempt by Little to limit membership of the SRIA only to members of the RCC, and the wearing of RCC regalia at SRIA meetings. On one of the few occasions that Hughan was present and Little absent from an SRIA meeting, Hughan took the chair on 9 July 1869, when a resolution in the name of Angelo Lewis (notice of motion given on 8 April 1869) regarding the issue was discussed and deferred until the January meeting, but was subsequently withdrawn at the meeting on 14 October 1869 – Hughan apparently got his own way.<sup>63</sup> Notwithstanding this Little continued to pursue a number of joint initiatives, including *The Rosicrucian* magazine, with himself as the editor, becoming the official mouthpiece for the Red Cross of Constantine in 1873,<sup>64</sup> featuring articles and information about both the SRIA and RCC in almost equal measure, and the sharing of office facilities with both the RCC and the Province of Middlesex in 1874,<sup>65</sup> both schemes being to the financial advantage of the SRIA.

Little's duplicity in the administration of the society is further exemplified with the election in July 1870 of Lord Lytton<sup>66</sup> as an Honorary Member and the Grand Patron of the Society<sup>67</sup>, no doubt in an attempt to enhance the gravitas and status of the society. The problem is that, not for the first time, Little had acted unilaterally and the recipient knew nothing of the proposal. In a letter from Irwin to Little he says 'p.s. Lord Lytton has just written to me to say he is extremely surprised at my calling him Grand Patron, as he has never sanctioned such.'<sup>68</sup> Every member on entry to the SRIA is asked to select a motto that is entered in the Golden Book, and it is more than ironic that Little's recorded motto is *Vincit Omnia Veritas* – 'Truth Conquers All Things!'

Little's penchant for taking unilateral action is further exhibited in the formation of the first two colleges of the order, both of which appear to have been created out of the need of expediency and to satisfy the personal ambitions of two parties, albeit for different reasons. The 'Rules and Ordinances of the Rosicrucian Society of England' as pub-

<sup>61</sup> *The Rosicrucian*, January 1872, 192-194

<sup>62</sup> *Freemasons' Magazine and Mirror*, 27 February 1869, 168-171; *Freemasons' Magazine and Mirror*, 26 March 1870, 249; *Freemason*, 2 April 1870, p163; *Freemason*, 9 April 1870, 174-175.

<sup>63</sup> Minutes Rosicrucian Society of England, 8, April 1869, 8 July 1869, and 14 October 1869.

<sup>64</sup> *The Rosicrucian*, January 1873, 24

<sup>65</sup> Minutes of the Meeting of High Council, 24 April 1874, *The Rosicrucian*, July 1874, 98

<sup>66</sup> Edward Bulwer-Lytton, who became Lord Lytton in 1866, was the author of the novel *Zanoni* published in 1842 in which Rosicrucianism and esotericism were central features.

<sup>67</sup> Minutes of the Rosicrucian Society of England, 14 July 1870

<sup>68</sup> R. A. Gilbert, 'The Supposed Rosy Crucian Society', Caron et al. (eds.), *Ésotérisme, Gnoses et Imaginaire Symbolique*, Leuven: Peeters, 2001, 399.

lished in the *Rosicrucian* in July 1868, a year after the first meeting of the society, specify that the society should meet in London – in other words just one unit – and limits the grand total of members to 144, or the square of twelve.<sup>69</sup>

Captain Francis G. Irwin was one of the early members of the RCC and a major influence in the Bristol and surrounding area, where he was a founder of Rose and Lilly Conclave No. 10 in Weston-super-Mare in 1868 and appointed Inspector General for Bristol in the same year. Irwin was a regular correspondent with Little<sup>70</sup> and clearly had ambitions to expand his Masonic portfolio. Despite the resolution made the previous year it was agreed in April 1869 that ‘Capt. Irwin of Bristol be permitted to form a College at Bristol, restricted to the number of 12 members, including himself as Chief Adept.’<sup>71</sup> The link between the RCC and SRIA is evident with the appointment of Benjamin Cox, who was the Recorder of Rose and Lily Conclave, as the new Provincial Secretary-General of the college that was formed in December 1869. While it would appear that the college in Bristol was founded on the basis of a friendship and firm working relationship between Little and Irwin, the formation of the college in Manchester was anything but, involving as it did Charles Matier, and on the basis, to quote an old adage, ‘keep your friends close and your enemies even closer’.

### The Ancient and Primitive Rite of Misraim

While it is possible to establish some common connections in the role played by Little in the formation of the RCC and SRIA, the same cannot be said of his involvement with the Ancient and Primitive Rite of Misraim. The rite appears to have materialized in England under his direction from nowhere in December 1870 and disappeared just as quickly the following year, leaving in its wake a tsunami that all but overwhelmed Little as described later. The Rite of Memphis (ninety-seven degrees), the Rite of Misraim (ninety degrees), the Ancient and Primitive Rite of Misraim (ninety degrees) of Little, the ‘condensed’ Ancient and Primitive Rite of Misraim (thirty-three degrees) of John Yarker, are all mystic in nature and based on ancient Egyptian alchemical and occult references. They are also the cause of much confusion and bemusement to most Masonic scholars. At various times the Rites of Memphis and Misraim have been practised separately, combined into an order comprising almost two hundred degrees and condensed into one consisting of thirty-three degrees. Insofar as this paper is concerned the main focus centres on the Ancient and Primitive Rite of Misraim as introduced by Little and in an attempt to minimise confusion and nomenclature henceforth referred to in this

<sup>69</sup> *The Rosicrucian*, July 1868, 1-2

<sup>70</sup> Correspondence between Irwin and a number of other significant Masonic figures of the time including, Little, Mackenzie, Cox and Matier are held in the archives in the Library and Museum of Freemasonry.

<sup>71</sup> Minutes Rosicrucian Society of England, 8 April 1869

paper 'Misraim' to distinguish it from the 'condensed' Ancient and Primitive Rite fostered by Yarker.

Misraim was probably formulated in Italy in about 1805, and introduced into France some ten years later by three brothers, Marc, Joseph, and Michel Bédarride. The origin of Memphis is even more obscure, but it emerges in France at about the same time as Misraim, having been established in Egypt a short time previously by Samuel Honis. Whatever its origin Memphis was banned in England by the UGLE in 1859 ostensibly because the rite conferred the first three degrees of Freemasonry. Both Misraim and indeed the Ancient and Accepted Rite accept the three degrees of Craft Masonry to be the equivalent of the first three degrees of their respective systems.

It would appear that both Misraim and Memphis were exported to the USA as a combined order, comprising nearly two hundred degrees, by Harry Seymour. Seymour condensed the multifarious degrees into the Ancient and Primitive Rite of Misraim consisting of thirty-three degrees. John Yarker lived most of his life in Manchester, was active in the import/export business and travelled overseas. It was during one of his visits to the USA that he became involved with Misraim and Memphis. In a letter to Irwin dated 30 November 1872 Yarker confirms that he is in possession of Seymour's official thirty-three degrees ritual but that Seymour had promised to lend him for copying the ninety degrees ritual.<sup>72</sup> Although the authority by which he acted is a matter of dispute, Yarker brought back to England the condensed rite, which he promulgated, in direct opposition to and to the extreme annoyance of the Supreme Council of the Ancient and Accepted Rite from which he was expelled on 19 October 1870. It is difficult to comprehend why Little would even want to get involved in Misraim, but both *The Freemason* of 31 December 1870 and *The Rosicrucian* magazine of January 1871 report the establishment, on 28 December 1870 at the Freemasons' Tavern, of the 'Bective' Sanctuary of Levites of the Ancient and Primitive Rite of Misraim, consisting of ninety degrees. According to the two reports, both clearly written by Little, between eighty and 100 members were inducted into the thirty-three degrees of the order in groups of seven. Six brethren were then elected for advancement to the sixty-sixth degree and the principal chairs were filled by the Conservators General: Robert Wentworth Little 90°, the Earl of Limerick 90° and Sigismund Rosenthal 90°. It was also announced that the following had accepted office as follows: the Earl of Bective, Sovereign Grand Master; Colonel Francis Burdett, Deputy Sovereign Grand Master, and Regent, ad interim; the Earl of Limerick, Senior Grand Superintendent; Sir Frederick Williams, MP, Junior Grand Superintendent; and that for administrative purposes Misraim was attached to the Red Cross of Constantine.

<sup>72</sup> Manuscript letter from J Yarker to Capt FG Irwin, 30 November 1872, Archives Library and Museum of Freemasonry

The second meeting of Misraim was held on 21 January 1871, when three members were accepted as members of the 33°. Forty brethren were selected for the next grade that of the 67°, Benevolent Knight; the degree is now placed 66° in order not to conflict with a 'degree of somewhat ceremonial in the A. and A. Rite'. Out of the members of the 66°, eighteen were selected to the 77°, Regulators-General of the Order, and they in turn selected six of their number to the rank of Conservators-General, the 90° or ultimate degree. The third and apparently last meeting of the rite took place on 8 April when a twelve-man committee was appointed to take the future organization of the order into consideration for report to a future meeting. However, as far as can be gleaned from the Masonic press in general and *The Freemason* in particular, especially bearing in mind that Little was editor at the time, there are no further references found relating to any activities or meetings of Little's Misraim.

The origin, history, and ritual of Misraim are beyond the scope of this paper, other than how it relates to Little's attempt to secure its provenance by attempting to link it back it to Marc Bédarride. Little claims to have brought the rite to England through the authority granted in a diploma to Isaac Crémieux and that its credibility was cemented in being witnessed by Major Edward Hamilton Finney, who had received the degrees some thirty-seven years previously as a pupil of Marc Bédarride. Crémieux was Sovereign Grand Commander of the A&A (Scottish) Rite of France (1869–80) but as such had no authority to act on behalf of the Grand College of Rites of the Grand Orient of France, which it could be argued may have had a legitimate interest and control of the Rite. Little maintained that Crémieux would have been present, had it not been for urgent business detaining him in France. Crémieux who was playing a leading role in the Délégation or the de facto government in exile, was actually in Bordeaux on the day of the meeting.<sup>73</sup> Nor, needless to say, is there any documentary evidence to support Finney's reception into the order some thirty-seven years previously, let alone what relevance that would have on proceedings, other than perhaps providing Little with a copy of the ritual.

An overview of the introduction of the Rite of Misraim is neatly summarised in a letter from Benjamin Cox to Captain Francis George Irwin dated 31 December 1870:

I see that Bro. Little has at last got hold of authority to work the Rite of Misraim, what next? Good heavens. 99° to work & then to be entitled to write "Sir Knt Belblowsblower" this will beat Bro Parfitt's "Rose Crucis" by a long way.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>73</sup> E. Howe, *AQC* Vol. 85, 1972, 'Fringe Masonry in England 1870-85', 242-295

<sup>74</sup> Manuscript letter from B Cox to Capt FG Irwin, 31 December 1870, Archives Library and Museum of Freemasonry



The formation of the Rite was ridiculed in the Masonic press as early as 18 February 1871, and there followed a very public debate with the antagonists using the columns of *The Freemasons' Magazine* and those supporting Little *The Freemason*, of which he was apparently the editor from 1869 to 1873.

The membership of the Rite of Misraim was drawn largely from that of the Red Cross of Constantine as indeed were the early leading members:

	RCC	SRIA	Misraim
Earl of Bective	Grand Sovereign	Honorary President	Sovereign Grand Master
Sir Frederick Williams, MP	Grand Viceroy	Honorary Vice President	Junior Grand Superintendent
Col. Francis Burdett	Grand Senior General	Honorary Vice President	Deputy Sovereign Grand Master

Little's duplicity began to be exposed very quickly. The Ancient and Accepted Rite (A&A), which had only been founded in England some twenty-five years earlier, was still establishing itself as a sovereign body and sensitive to any organization that could be perceived to be challenging its authority and control of its thirty-three degrees. It is one of the reasons that it entered into a 'Treaty of Alliance' with the Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons of England and Wales in May 1871 to secure mutual recognition of each other's sovereignty over their respective degrees.

Reference has already been made to Little acknowledging the fact that the 66° degree of his Rite of Misraim was similar to one of the degrees under the control of the A&A and amending his own degree system accordingly. As far as the A&A were concerned this was further evidence that Misraim posed a real threat and they decided to take decisive action on a number of different fronts. Captain Nathaniel Phillips, the Grand Secretary General of the A&A, in a letter dated 16 March 1871 reminded the Earl of Bective of the obligation he had taken pledging allegiance to the A&A Rite, and putting pressure on him to withdraw his support and involvement in Misraim. It would appear that Little had not sought the prior approval of Bective for him to accept the office of Sovereign Grand Master, as the correspondence contains reference to the fact that that Little wrote to Bective asking him to reconsider his decision not to accept the office, with Montagu urging him not to do so. In July 1871 Supreme Council were able to confirm that Bective had severed his connection with Misraim.<sup>75</sup> Similar pressure had been put on Burdett; he was a member of the 32° of the A&A Rite in Ireland and having withdrawn his support for Misraim wrote asking to be affiliated to the English A&A Rite, who responded in the affirmative but only if he accepted membership of the 30°, there being no vacancies in the 31° and 32°. Burdett clearly accepted the advice offered because in May 1879 he was admitted to the 33° and made Inspector General of the Southern

<sup>75</sup> J. Mandleberg, *Ancient and Accepted*, Supreme Council 33° London, 1995, 196

District.<sup>76</sup> Major Edward Finney, who seems to have been a major influence behind the scenes of Misraim, had only been advanced to the 31° of the A&A Rite in 1869, and was made to feel the displeasure of the Supreme Council, as indeed was Lord Limerick, who had been personally affiliated by the Sovereign Grand Commander to the A&A Rite only three weeks previously.

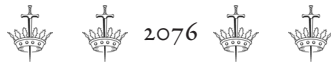
As early as January 1871 a letter was printed in *The Freemasons' Magazine and Masonic Mirror* extremely critical of the Rite of Misraim and concluding with the warning that those joining Misraim may well find that they will have violated their obligation of allegiance to the Supreme Council of the A&A. Not satisfied with putting pressure on its own members, the newly appointed Grand Secretary General of the A&A Rite wrote to the Grand Secretary of the Grand Orient of France, Thévenot. The correspondence was re-printed in *The Freemasons' Magazine and Masonic Mirror* of 1 April 1871, in which Thévenot makes abundantly clear that neither Crémieux nor anybody else had the authority from the Grand Orient to establish the Rite of Misraim in London. Needless to say Little responded in kind through *The Freemason*, but this can best be described as obfuscation, attempting to minimise the role played by Crémieux and instead putting Finney centre stage, without actually naming him, on the basis that he was Bédarride's pupil some thirty-seven years previously. The articles both for and against continued to appear in the Masonic press, and reached a crescendo in June 1871, when Sir Patrick Colquhoun raised the matter of Little's involvement in Misraim in Grand Lodge, and continued to fill many column inches in the Masonic press until September the following year. The irony is that by the time the issue was raised in Grand Lodge, Misraim was all but dead and buried, not least by the concerted actions of Supreme Council.

To what extent the antipathy by Supreme Council was aimed at Little himself is difficult to say. It is certainly true that there was little love lost between the two parties. Little in correspondence in 1869 with Captain Francis Irwin complains that pressure was being brought to bear on Sir Frederick Williams, MP, to withdraw from his office of Grand Viceroy in the Red Cross of Constantine and asking Irwin if he might secure the services of 'Beach in his place as it would be such a checkmate to Phillips and his ilk and show him we are not to be beaten.'<sup>77</sup> However in 1870 Phillips wrote to Col. JFB Mcleod Moore in Canada, extremely surprised because Wentworth Little had come to consult him 'respecting the acceptance of an Honorary 30° which he informed me had been offered to him by you.' As Phillips continued, 'I am not aware of any power having been delegated to you to confer any Honorary Degrees in Canada let alone England

<sup>76</sup> J. Mandelberg, *Ancient and Accepted*, Supreme Council 33° London, 1995, 363

<sup>77</sup> Manuscript letter from RW Little to Capt FG Irwin, 9 June 1869, Archives Library and Museum of Freemasonry

by this Supreme Council.<sup>78</sup> Notwithstanding all that transpired Little was elected to the 30° by Supreme Council on 9 October 1872. It is also worth noting that at the time Mcleod Moore was the Chief Inspector General for Canada in the RCC.<sup>79</sup>



**Richard Gan** was born in 1950, and graduated from London University with a degree in Geology, and also took a Master's degree in Education. He also holds a degree in Management Studies from the Open University. His professional career was varied, including teaching and educational administration at a senior level. He retired as the Deputy Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons in June 2010 and is a senior Grand Officer in all the major orders of Freemasonry. Having relinquished the role of Editor of *The Square* in 2014 he now has more time to develop his writing and research into Victorian Freemasonry and the orders beyond the Craft. He became a full member of Quatuor Coronati Lodge in 2014.



**David Peabody** was initiated in Icení Lodge No. 6066 in 1980 and was Master in 1989. Appointed as a Grand Officer in 2000, David has been active in many other Masonic orders. In Masonic research he is chiefly concerned with eighteenth and nineteenth century history. He is a keen photographer and has photographed HRH The Duke of Kent and HRH Prince Michael of Kent, and the heads

<sup>78</sup> J. Mandleberg, *Ancient and Accepted*, Supreme Council 33° London, 1995, 160

<sup>79</sup> *Red Cross of Constantine Statutes and Year Book*, 1868, 16

of many other orders. His main concern is the conservation of the photographic image, the careers of the subjects and their photographers. He became a full member of Quatuor Coronati Lodge No. 2076 in 1995 and served as Master in 2006.



**Susan Snell** qualified as an archivist in 1985 after taking a Latin degree at the University of Birmingham, and is currently the Archivist and Records Manager at the Library and Museum of Freemasonry, London, aiming to increase accessibility for researchers to these unique resources by cataloguing the archive collections. Since curating an exhibition 'Squaring the Triangle: Freemasonry and anti-slavery' in 2007, she continues to document the presence of black and Asian Freemasons within eighteenth and early nineteenth-century membership records. Her interests include Masonic

membership among the Parsi faith in India and London and the role of Freemasonry in uniting and assimilating communities. In 2013 she completed her MA in Eighteenth Century Studies with a dissertation focusing on the Freemason William Perfect (1734–1809), Provincial Grand Master of Kent, a doctor of medicine who specialised in man-midwifery, smallpox inoculation and the care of the mentally ill, an amateur actor and published poet. She has catalogued the archives of the Antients' Grand Lodge, the Supreme Grand Chapter and The Royal Masonic Hospital, and has facilitated access to the film collection at the Library and Museum of Freemasonry. Her published works include articles on the charities and verse contributions to the *Freemasons' Magazine: or, General and Complete Library*, and successor titles, 1793–98.