

**‘1717 and All That’
The Political and Religious Context**

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Andrew Prescott and Susan Sommers have advanced a detailed analysis to support their contention that the Grand Lodge of England and thus modern freemasonry should be dated to 24 June 1721, the day on which the Duke of Montagu was installed as grand master at Stationers’ Hall, rather than 1717, the year more widely accepted. I am not going to argue that the paper presented at Quatuor Coronati’s 2016 Conference at Queens’ Cambridge was intended as a tongue-in-cheek comment on the tercentenary celebrations but accept that their analysis and re-evaluation is designed to re-examine historical sources and the key individuals involved. Regardless, the publicity generated subsequently requires that Prescott and Sommers’ arguments be taken seriously.

Prescott and Sommers’ work hinges on a number of specific and well-researched points which John Hamill addresses in part in his paper and goes some way towards refuting. My argument extends the case for 1717 and examines the context in which the first grand lodge was constructed and the political rationale behind its establishment. In short, I look at the people instrumental in forming the new grand lodge and provide a framework for their actions. By doing so, I hope to explain why the evidence points to a date of formation in 1717 rather than 1721.

It should be intuitive that many institutions including the Grand Lodge of London & Westminster, later the Grand Lodge of England, are not created in a vacuum. They are a product of their time and of their founders’ values, tenets and insecurities. Moreover, such institutions rarely if ever spring fully formed from their progenitors’ skulls but are more commonly crafted over several years. Indeed, one of the most powerful arguments against the notion that the new grand lodge sprang from nothingness in June 1721 with the Duke of Montagu at its head is the sheer implausibility of that statement, despite what Prescott and Sommers argue.

The key to placing the date of the founding of the first grand lodge some years before 1721, and to 1717 in particular, is to understand the febrile political and religious context of the second decade of the eighteenth century. It was a period marked by the political fallout from the death of Queen Anne, the last of the Stuart monarchs, and the coronation of George I two months later in October 1714. The coronation of the Elector of Hanover led to riots in some twenty cities and towns across England, from Canterbury to Shrewsbury, and Taunton to Norwich. London itself was not immune and king’s return from the Lord Mayor’s banquet in November that year was disrupted by protesters, while rioting broke out at Whitechapel.¹

¹ Abel Boyer (ed), *The Political State of Great Britain* (London: J. Baker, 1711-40), volume 8, p. 439; cf., also, BL Add. MSS 22202, ff. 200-12.

The parliamentary elections of March 1715 gave the Whigs a crushing majority in the House of Commons and they followed up with a purge of virtually all remaining Tories from central government. This triggered another wave of anti-Hanoverian riots, with Bristol, Gloucester, Oxford, Manchester and Leeds all affected. But for George I and his new government worse was to come. Taking advantage of the growing discontent and building upon an existing support base, the Earl of Mar raised James Stuart's royal standard at Braemar to foment a rebellion in Scotland. He met with initial success and a swathe of Scotland went over to the Pretender, as did parts of Durham, Northumberland and Cumberland.

The Jacobite insurrection in Scotland was a product of several factors, including a lingering Scottish resentment at the corruption that had accompanied the passing of the Act of Union by the Scottish parliament just eight years earlier. Key figures within the Scottish aristocracy had been suborned with cash and honours, and Robert Burns' castigating comment that Scotland had been 'bought and sold for English gold' was an accurate reflection of the political reality.²

A second factor was equally if not more important. Many in Scotland nurtured a deep moral and religious hostility to the choice of George of Hanover over James Stuart, the late queen's closest living relative.³ But although James was Queen Anne's half-brother, as a Catholic he was excluded from the succession under the Act of Settlement, which limited the choice of monarch exclusively to James I of England's (James VI of Scotland) Protestant heirs alone.⁴

A significant minority within Britain - Protestant and Catholic – believed that there was only one legitimate basis for the British constitution: the divine right of kings. From this standpoint the authority to govern was derived solely from God, and a king ruled his nation by virtue of God's direct command. Hereditary succession was the only means by which a king could and should be replaced, and it was thus unlawful for parliament to interfere with James's inalienable right. The unavoidable result of such an analysis was that George I's coronation was neither legally binding nor morally valid.

More worryingly for the government and its followers, James Stuart had other supporters, not least those who stood to benefit greatly from his return. This was not limited to Tory landowners forced from power by George I and his Whig administration. France, Spain and Sweden also favoured the Stuart cause.

² Robert Burns (1759-1796). The line comes from *Such a Parcel of Rogues in a Nation* (1791).

³ Anne and Mary, her older sisters, were the product of James II's first marriage to Anne Hyde (1638-1671).

⁴ It is a Stuart myth that there were between thirty and fifty Catholic contenders who had more direct links to Queen Anne than Prince George. There were six, and all were foreign. But the Jacobite fable was assisted by George having been born in Hanover with German as his first language and limited spoken English: cf. William Gibson, 'How Closely Related Were George I and Queen Anne?', comment added 29 July 2014 at <https://thehistoryofparliament.wordpress.com/2014/07/29/how-closely-related-were-george-i-and-queen-anne/>, accessed 2 December 2017. The Act of Settlement excluded from the throne 'every Person ... reconciled to or shall hold Communion with the See or Church of Rome or shall profess the Popish Religion or shall marry a Papist'.

Although the 1715 Rising was defeated in 1716 and an attempt made at rapprochement, this did not end Jacobite opposition. Successive governments from 1716 onwards feared that a French or Spanish-backed invasion in tandem with another Jacobite insurgence could seriously threaten Hanoverian Britain. A successful rebellion would sever the Hanoverian line, dismember the Whig administration, and dial the political clock back to the early 1680s.

Despite what has been written by many modern historians, such concerns were genuine, justified, and shared widely within the Whig establishment. And continental European support for James Stuart and his followers was real, not imagined.

Within the next few years there were three attempts to promote a domestic insurrection in Britain in tandem with a foreign invasion. They occurred in 1717, 1719 and 1721. The dates are significant for freemasons for obvious reasons and one can well imagine the drive to utilise freemasonry as a bastion of support for George I and the government during this period in conjunction with the formation of a grand lodge that would give the organisation structure and discipline.

Each conspiracy was extinguished, in no little measure through the endeavours of a cabal of influential figures at the heart of the administration, not least Charles Delafaye, an under-secretary of state, senior magistrate, and the government's anti-Jacobite spymaster.

I have argued elsewhere that Delafaye was the most important freemason in the early eighteenth century of whom you have never heard.⁵ He was a senior member of the Duke of Richmond's lodge at the Rummer & Grapes, later the Horn Tavern, and a Huguenot, one of tens of thousands of Protestant refugees who had found sanctuary in England following more than a century of sometimes genocidal persecution, especially within France.

It was through Delafaye's influence and the endeavours of other like-minded masonic colleagues, including Jean Theophilus Desaguliers and George Payne, the Duke of Richmond's deputy at the Horn, that freemasonry was transformed into a pro-Hanoverian and pro-establishment organisation that promoted a Whiggist and Enlightenment agenda that implicitly and explicitly stood against Europe's absolutist monarchies.

The change was effected not only through the creation of a grand lodge and federal governance structure, but also via the revision of masonic ritual and the rewriting of freemasonry's charges and regulations. These were altered to endorse and advance the Enlightenment concepts of John Locke and Isaac Newton, including constitutional rather than absolutist government; religious toleration; the promotion of education and science - a world interpreted through rational observation rather than religious diktat; meritocracy; and (albeit limited) democracy. The rapid addition of celebrity aristocrats, 'distinguished gentlemen' and eminent professionals, would give freemasonry and its new grand lodge social stature, and Delafaye, Desaguliers, Payne and others positioned it intentionally not only to embrace Whig political principles but also as a beacon for the aspirational within society.

⁵ Ric Berman, *Espionage, Diplomacy & the Lodge* (2017); also *AQC* 130, 325-48.

The first masonic charge - *Concerning God and Religion* - replaced what had been an invocation to the Trinity and formal declaration of Christian belief. The new wording obliged freemasons only to 'obey the moral law' within a framework of 'that Religion in which all Men agree'. It would no longer be the case that a mason should 'be of the religion of that country or nation' where he resided, but necessary only to believe in God and be a 'good man and true'.

The charge was no longer an avowal of support for a specific religion or church. Christian belief may have been implied but the new wording was a declaration of faith in a divine being without a stated preference for any given form of worship. It was latitudinarian, if not deist, and represented a denial of the importance of ecclesiastical organisation and doctrine.⁶

At the same time, the charge advanced the principle of religious tolerance, not least the right to hold to Protestant beliefs in a Catholic country. This was a key component of Huguenot philosophy and an Enlightenment sensibility shared by many Whigs. It became a core masonic tenet.

The second Masonic charge - *Of the Civil Magistrate Supreme and Subordinate* - addressed the Jacobite threat to the Hanoverian succession and the supremacy of parliamentary and judicial governance. 'A Mason is a peaceable Subject to the Civil Powers ... is never to be concerned in Plots and Conspiracies against the Peace and Welfare of the Nation.'

The charge echoed the changes to England's constitution in the wake of the Glorious Revolution of 1688 that had swept James II from the throne to be replaced by William and Mary. Where allegiance to the crown – 'to be a true liege man to the king' – had been central to the mediaeval Old Charges, freemasonry now stated simply that freemasons were subject to the 'supreme legislature' – not to an absolute monarch but to a constitutional monarch ruling in conjunction with parliament and the judiciary – a separation of powers which in Desaguliers' words 'does most nearly resemble the Natural Government of our System':

The Primaries lead their Satellites,
Who guided, not enslav'd, their Orbits run,
Attend their Chief, but still respect the Sun,
Salute him as they go, and his Dominion own.⁷

The fourth charge - *Of Masters, Wardens, Fellows and Apprentices* – also defied convention, asserting that 'preferment among Masons is grounded upon real Worth and personal Merit only; that so the Lords may be well served, the Brethren not put to Shame, nor the Royal Craft despised ... no Master or Warden is chosen by Seniority, but for his Merit'. This was radical in an age when precedence, rank and patronage almost always determined position and promotion.

⁶ The latitudinarian nature of freemasonry was also demonstrated by its acceptance of Jews and even Catholics, including an early grand master, Thomas Howard, 8th Duke of Norfolk (GM 1730).

⁷ J.T. Desaguliers, *The Newtonian System of the World*, pp. iii-iv.

A catechism later summarised and reinforced these and other masonic obligations. It remains in place today. Sworn by each incoming master, the declarations were and are designed to strengthen the moral and masonic authority of the Grand Lodge of England and to ensure compliance with the established civil order.

I agree to be a good man and true, and strictly to obey the moral law.

I agree to be a peaceable subject and cheerfully to conform to the laws of the country in which I reside.

I promise not to be concerned in plots and conspiracies against government but patiently to submit to the decisions of the supreme legislature.

I agree to pay a proper respect to the civil magistrate, to work diligently, live creditably and act honourably by all men.

There are many others.

The ideas that freemasonry presented and championed were a direct function of the political and religious mores of its Whig and Huguenot leadership. And they were a response to the threat posed by James Stuart, the 'king over the water', and his supporters. A Stuart monarchy would have seen the Whigs chased from office and their political and financial capital compromised. And for the Huguenot refugees who had found sanctuary in Britain having fled persecution in France, the peril posed by the Jacobites was regarded as existential.

Those who argue that fear of Protestant persecution was misplaced and that the Pretender would have accepted religious toleration and been in accord with his father's Declaration of Indulgence have a point.⁸ But while this was a possibility, it is more reasonable to believe that many in eighteenth-century Britain would not have disregarded the powerful influence of France and Spain, James Stuart's main supporters, and given weight to the persecution of Protestants within their borders.⁹

Anderson wrote that 'Four Old Lodges' created the new Grand Lodge of London & Westminster. But it is clear that the lodge at the Rummer & Grapes, later the Horn Tavern, was the single most important driving force. The Rummer dominated the other three lodges not only numerically but also socially and politically. In its first formal returns in 1723 the Horn named some 72 members.¹⁰ In contrast, the Goose and Gridiron reported 23; the Queen's Head, formerly the Apple Tree, 15; and the Crown, Parker's Lane, then at the

⁸ The irony was that James II while on the throne had assisted Huguenot refugees in England and protested to Louis XIV against their maltreatment in France. But his and his son's later dependence on French and Spanish support made any resumption of such a policy less believable and those Huguenots who had settled in England saw the retention of the Protestant Hanoverian succession as a bulwark against further persecution.

⁹ James's proclamations were issued with respect to Scotland on 12 February 1687 and England on 4 April 1687. In brief, the declarations suspended penalties for not attending the established Church of England and not receiving communion; they also permitted worship other than in the Established Church and ended the obligation to take a religious oath before obtaining civil or military office.

¹⁰ Desaguliers, a grand officer, was omitted from the list. With his inclusion the total is 73.

Queen's Head, Turnstile, Holborn, 21.

Unlike the three other founding lodges where few members had notable social status, the Rummer & Grapes comprised members of the aristocracy and London's elites. Four were the grandsons of Charles II and a fifth the grandson of James II.¹¹ Many sat in parliament or influenced those who did. A number were senior military officers, colonels and above, with a minority financing their own regiments, including Earl Delorraine, colonel of the 2nd troop of horse guards and of a regiment of foot, and the Duke of Montagu, who had regiments of horse and foot and was colonel of His Majesty's Own Troop of Horse Guards, later the Life Guards, the army's premier cavalry regiment. Others had senior roles within the offices of the secretaries of state and the Exchequer, and some twenty sat as magistrates on the Westminster and Middlesex benches, several as chairmen.¹²

I would argue that the choice of Anthony Sayer to be the first grand master in 1717, and of Jacob Lambell and Joseph Elliott as his wardens, was designed to draw a veil over the overarching influence of the Rummer & Grapes in the creation of the new grand lodge and to conceal the motivation of its founders. The measure of its authority was nonetheless apparent the following year when George Payne was appointed grand master, and the year after when Desaguliers succeeded him. Payne and Desaguliers were among the principal architects of modern freemasonry alongside Martin Folkes and William Cowper, and the lesser known but influential Alexander Chocke, Nathaniel Blackerby, George Carpenter and, of course, Charles Delafaye, all government loyalists.

And why did Payne take the chair at grand lodge once again in 1720. It is conjecture but the answer may be because the Duke of Montagu had not yet been persuaded to assume the titular head of the new organisation and a trusted stand-in was required in the interim. Payne was not only one of Desaguliers' closest Masonic collaborators. He was also Richmond's deputy at the Rummer & Grapes and a loyal government supporter, listed as a justice of the peace in Westminster in April 1715, a date which confirms that his political sympathies were deemed beyond doubt.¹³ He remained on the bench for thirty-five years.¹⁴ The Duke of Richmond, a man 'bred up from a child in the Whig principles',¹⁵ provided patronage to Payne throughout his life, commenting to the Duke of Newcastle more than twenty years later that 'I have always recommended one Mr George Payne, an old acquaintance of mine in Westminster...'¹⁶

¹¹ The four grandsons of Charles II were Charles Lennox, 2nd Duke of Richmond (1701-1750); Charles FitzRoy, 2nd Duke of Grafton (1683-1757); Henry Scott, Earl Delorraine (1676-1730); and Francis Scott, Earl of Dalkeith, 2nd Duke of Buccleuch (1705-1751). James Waldegrave was the grandson of James II; he was created Earl Waldegrave by George II in 1729. Guides to the early members of the Horn can be found in A.W. Oxford, *No. 4 An Introduction to the History of The Royal Somerset House and Inverness Lodge* (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1928) and Christopher Powell's *The Earliest Members of Lodge IV* (Sheffield, 2015) and subsequent revised editions.

¹² Ric Berman, *Foundations of Modern Freemasonry*, (2012), esp. chapter three.

¹³ Middlesex Sessions Papers, Justices' Working Documents, 22 April 1715: LL ref: LM SM PS 501440187.

¹⁴ Westminster Sessions Papers, Justices' Working Documents, January 1750. LL ref: LM WJ PS 654500004.

¹⁵ British Library, Add. MS 32700, fol. 264.

¹⁶ Richmond to Newcastle, 28 November 1742: Timothy McCann, *The Correspondence of the Dukes of Richmond and Newcastle*, pp. 91-2.

Payne's contribution to the development of grand lodge and English freemasonry lay in his willingness to compile the *General Regulations* in 1720, to devote time to the construction of a new grand lodge, and in his personal network of relationships at Westminster. His neighbours at New Palace Yard included William Cowper, chairman of the Westminster and Middlesex benches and Clerk of the Parliaments; as well as Alexander Chocke, Francis Sorrel, Nathaniel Blackerby and George Carpenter, all later grand officers. And together with Martin Folkes, Payne would have been pivotal in encouraging the Duke of Richmond to speak with his close friend, the Duke of Montagu, to persuade him to accept the position of grand master.

Montagu was a quintessential Whig, loyal to the Hanoverians and to the crown. He was also a key supporter of the Huguenots and one of Britain's wealthiest men, a popular celebrity whose activities were front page news. His honours and positions included that of Master of the Great Wardrobe, a position inherited from his father; the lord lieutenancy of two counties, Northamptonshire and Warwickshire; Knight of the Garter and, in 1725, Grand Master of the newly formed Order of the Bath, a position he held until his death.¹⁷ His willingness to serve as a figurehead attracted aspirational new members to freemasonry, made the society a focus for press attention, and gave it the status and traction that had been absent under the socially irrelevant Sayer, Payne and Desaguliers.

The Horn's influence during the formative period of grand lodge and the decade thereafter was unquestionable. The lodge provided five grand masters between 1719 and 1726 and a deputy grand master in every year bar two from 1720 until 1735.¹⁸ Its members held the pivotal positions of grand secretary, occupied by Cowper from 1723-26, and Edward Wilson the following year, and grand treasurer, occupied by Nathaniel Blackerby, Cowper's colleague at the Houses of Parliament, from 1730-38. The Horn's members also dominated the Grand Charity Committee, the *de facto* standing committee of grand lodge and precursor to the Board of General Purposes.

I have mentioned the influence of the Huguenots on early eighteenth-century freemasonry elsewhere and grand lodge's membership records confirm that they were disproportionately numerous. But it is important to understand the backstory which from 1715 underpinned their commitment to a Protestant Hanoverian Britain and to the new grand lodge.

Across the latter part of the seventeenth century and into the eighteenth, waves of émigré Huguenots had fled France for religious sanctuary. Some 50-80,000 came to Britain, the majority settling in London. Their political perspective was a consequence of more than 150 years of oppression.

¹⁷ The order was created on 18 May 1725.

¹⁸ The Horn's deputy grand masters were George Payne, 1720; John Desaguliers, 1722-3, 1725; William Cowper, 1726; Andrew Chocke, 1727; Nathaniel Blackerby, 1728-9; Thomas Batson, 1730-4 (Payne's brother-in-law); and George Payne (again) 1735. John Beale (Crown & Anchor) was deputy grand master in 1721, he died soon after; and Martin Folkes (Bedford Head), a close friend of the Duke of Richmond, in 1724.

The Protestant Reformation, the development of Calvinism in France, and the creation of a French Reformed Church, brought France's Protestants into conflict with the country's Catholic aristocracy and Catholic Church hierarchy, whose power they threatened. The reaction was violent. What had been small-scale attacks on Huguenot congregants were followed in 1572 by what became known as the Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre.¹⁹ Estimates of the number of French Protestants killed vary, but the range spans the low tens of thousands to more than 80,000 as violence against the Huguenots rippled out from Paris across France.

The Huguenots' attempts to resist further repression were unsuccessful and persecution continued under Louis XIII, not least in the siege of La Rochelle in 1628 when the city's population plummeted from 27,000 to 5,000 through starvation and disease. The Catholic Church maintained its anti-Protestant stance over the next half century, with around three-quarters of France's 800 Protestant churches destroyed and thousands of Huguenots forcibly converted to Catholicism. Those who refused faced 'insupportable violence' - the destruction or confiscation of their estates, and imprisonment or death.²⁰

Under Louis XIV, the mistreatment of the Huguenots became more entrenched.²¹ It reached an apogee in the 1680s with the introduction of the *Dragonades*, the compulsory billeting of French dragoons on Huguenot households. The policy was synonymous with violence, rape and theft. And in 1685 Louis XIV rescinded his grandfather's Edict of Nantes. The limited civil protections that had applied under its aegis were removed, effectively depriving France's Protestants of their remaining political and religious liberties.

Huguenot migration from France accelerated in response. What had been a trickle of refugees from the mid-sixteenth century now became a torrent. Despite the penal risks, around a third of France's Huguenot population fled, an estimated 250,000 people, with more leaving in later years.²² Many migrated to the United Provinces. Others settled in the German states and Switzerland. A small number migrated to North America and Southern Africa.²³ But the most popular destination was England where they joined an existing Huguenot community which was itself the product of flight over the preceding century.²⁴

The influx had a substantial impact with the incoming refugees representing around 10% of London's 500,000 population in 1700. The Huguenot community had conformist and non-conformist branches but both shared an allegiance to their new home and to the crown.

¹⁹ Cf., James R. Smither, 'The St Bartholomew's Day Massacre and Images of Kingship in France: 1572-1574', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 22.1 (1991), 27-46, for an overview.

²⁰ Robert Burton, *Martyrs in Flames: or the history of Popery Displaying the horrid persecutions and cruelties exercised upon Protestants by the Papists, for many hundred years past* (London, 1729), 3rd edn., pp. 75-6.

²¹ Louis XIV (1638-1715), 'the Sun King'.

²² The French population at the time was c.18 million; England's was c.5 million.

²³ Robin Gwynn, *Huguenot Heritage* (Brighton: Sussex Academic, 2001), 2nd revised edn., pp. 29-30.

²⁴ Huguenot persecution continued in France notwithstanding Louis XV's announcement in 1715 that the Protestant religion in France had ended. There was intense maltreatment in the mid-eighteenth century and French public opinion only began to turn in the last quarter with an edict in 1787 that began the process of restoring the Huguenots' civil rights. France's National Assembly affirmed liberty of religion in 1789.

This was especially the case in the military where at least a fifth of England's officers were French or Low Country Huguenots, around 1,000 in total.

Although the 1713 Treaty of Utrecht would bring several decades of peace between Britain and France, French persecution of the Huguenots continued and French recognition of the Protestant faith was denied. And it was only two years later that England's Huguenot émigrés faced what was seen as an existential threat: 'l'invasion d'un prétendant papist' - the 1715 Jacobite Rising.²⁵

The defeat of the Rising the following year did not end Huguenot concerns. The accession of George I had marked the beginning of a new period of political vulnerability and the prospect of James Stuart seizing the British throne remained a serious threat as a series of conspiracies to invade Britain became apparent.

In 1717, Sweden and Spain offered financial and military backing for an uprising to James Stuart's supporters. British intelligence was alerted by agents in Europe and at home via the Secret Department of the Post Office, an organisation run by Jean Le Fevre, a Huguenot and later member of the King's Arms Lodge in Pall Mall, whose reporting line was to Charles Delafaye, the relevant under-secretary of state.

Intercepted and decrypted correspondence between Sweden's minister plenipotentiary in Europe and Carl Gyllenborg, the Swedish ambassador in London, gave Delafaye and the British government such unease that regardless of international law and that it was an assault on diplomatic immunity, Gyllenborg was arrested, his embassy searched and his papers seized.

The government went public to justify its actions, and the intercepted diplomatic correspondence was published in an anti-Swedish propaganda campaign headed by Daniel Defoe and co-ordinated by Delafaye in his role as the government's principal 'manager' of the press.²⁶

Britain and Sweden eventually stepped back from the brink and the planned invasion was abandoned, but on their return to Sweden, Gyllenborg and von Görtz moved to establish a second plan to reinstate James Stuart and cut the Hanoverian line from the British throne.

The scheme was put into execution in 1719, two years later, when Sweden agreed to back a Jacobite uprising in conjunction with a Spanish military and naval invasion. Spanish agreement had been secured through Cardinal Giulio Alberoni, a favourite of Philip V. But Britain was aware of the threat. Alberoni's mail had been intercepted and the threat it

²⁵ The term was coined by Henri de Massue, Marquis de Ruvigny (1648-1720), created 1st Earl of Galway in 1697. Galway was commander-in-chief of William's forces in Ireland and later made a Lord Justice of Ireland. He was also a second cousin of the 2nd Duke of Montagu.

²⁶ In addition to his writing and business interests, Defoe was a government spy and double agent. Cf., Paula R. Backscheider, 'Defoe, Daniel (1660?-1731)', *ODNB*, online edn, Jan 2008.

revealed was substantiated by other sources.²⁷ Once again, Delafaye was central to the information flow.

An invasion force was launched from Cádiz in March 1719. It comprised some twenty-seven vessels carrying around 5,000 Spanish troops.²⁸ The intention was to make landfall in south-west England and march on London in conjunction with local Jacobite sympathisers. The force was commanded by James Butler, Duke of Ormonde, who had previously served as Captain General of the British Army. The invasion was to be preceded by a diversionary attack in Scotland by a contingent of Spanish troops under the command of the exiled Earl Marischal who had sailed from Spain in an advance party. His role was to tie-down British troops in Scotland and with the backing of the Jacobite Highland clans, to march south to join ranks with Ormonde.

In the event, a storm in the English Channel dictated that the Spanish invasion would fail. The main Spanish fleet was dispersed by heavy seas and the ships that survived were ordered to return to port. Unaware of what had happened, Marischal's small force continued to Scotland. His diversionary attack landed 300 troops and captured the local garrison. But London had been forewarned. After a few weeks of skirmishing, Marischal was defeated by a British reconnaissance force landed from three frigates.

A third plot to overthrow the government was initiated just two years later. It was regarded as exceptionally serious. The Bishop of Rochester, Francis Atterbury, was at the centre of the conspiracy. He had taken his seat in the House of Lords in July 1713, just over a year before Queen Anne's death. But notwithstanding that he was part of the committee that drafted the congratulatory address from the Lords to George I, he was suspected of Stuart loyalties and as a Tory leader in the Lords been identified as an opponent to Whig interests.

Atterbury's hatred of the Whig's political and religious policies was tangible. He criticised the administration in two anonymous pamphlets, the first of which also contained a personal attack on George I, and by 1721 self-interest had persuaded him to support the Pretender with the aim of reinstating a Tory government and restoring himself to influence and power.

Atterbury began a correspondence with Jacobite agents and developed plans for an insurrection.²⁹ The strategy centred on an invasion force of Jacobite regiments in the

²⁷ Nicholas Rescer, *Leibnitz and Cryptography* (Pittsburg, PA: University of Pittsburg, 2012), p. 28: 'The Hanoverians ran an elaborate and efficient cryptographic service in which the Brunswick dukedoms of Callenberg and Celle functioned as one. Several postal interception stations were in operation. That at Nienburg intercepted post between France and the Nordic countries. That at Gifhorn processed north-south post between Wolfenbüttel and Braunschweig on the one side and Hamburg and the north on the other. The Thurn and Taxis station at Sulingen also provided material.'

²⁸ Some sources give twenty-nine vessels. 'Five thousand men, of which four thousand are to be foot, a thousand troopers, of which three hundred with their horses, the rest with their arms and accoutrements, and two month's pay for them, ten field pieces, and a thousand barrels of powder and fifteen thousand arms for foot, with everything necessary to convey them.' Alberoni to Ormonde, quoted in David Sharp, *The Battle of Glen Shiel 1719*: www.thesonsofscotland.co.uk/thebattleofglenshiel1719, accessed 6 December 2017.

²⁹ The conspirators included John Erskine, 6th Earl of Mar (1675-1732); Sir Henry Goring, 4th Bt. (1679-1731); William North, 6th Baron North and 2nd Baron Grey (1678-1734); Charles Boyle, 4th Earl of Orrery, (1674-1731);

service of the French and Spanish armies which would provide a catalyst for a general uprising led by Jacobite sympathisers within the Tory aristocracy. A mail intercept in 1722 confirmed the discovery of a cipher in the hand of George Kelly, one of Atterbury's co-conspirators,³⁰ while another provided Delafaye with details of a plan to seize the Tower of London under the cover of the Duke of Marlborough's funeral.³¹ That led to the precautionary despatch of three regiments of Foot from Hounslow Heath to London to safeguard the Bank of England, the Tower of London and the adjacent Royal Mint.³²

Atterbury's correspondence was monitored closely by Delafaye, and with the secretaries of state and Walpole aware of what was being planned, the government moved pre-emptively to arrest and interrogate those at the core of the conspiracy.

The 'design to raise an insurrection in this kingdom in favour of the Pretender'³³ was forestalled and denounced publicly, not least by the Middlesex and Westminster Justices who used a loyal address to condemn the 'wicked and traitorous designs'.³⁴ And alongside these scripted protestations of loyalty, the government moved to maintain calm, especially through newspaper articles planted by Delafaye to offer public reassurance.³⁵

With the country roused and the government wary, the new grand lodge was reported to be concerned that its forthcoming Quarterly Communication could be misconstrued and supposedly sent a deputation to the secretary of state, Viscount Townshend,³⁶ to obtain his consent for the meeting. A contemporary press report records that 'a select body of the Society of Freemasons waited on the Rt. Hon. the Lord Viscount Townshend, one of his Principal Secretaries of State, to signify to his Lordship, that being obliged by their Constitutions to hold a General Meeting now at Midsummer, according to ancient custom, they hoped the Administration would take no umbrage at their convention as they were all zealously affected to His Majesty's Person and Government'.³⁷

I have argued elsewhere that the purpose of the press report was not to seek permission but to put on record the loyalty of freemasonry to the Whig administration, something necessary with the mercurial Duke of Wharton having been installed as grand master following the Duke of Montagu.³⁸ Townshend's consent was forthcoming. Indeed, a refusal would have been improbable. His eldest son, Charles, MP for Great Yarmouth, was himself a freemason, a member of the lodge at the Old Devil Tavern in Temple Bar, and, more importantly so was Delafaye, Townshend's ultra-loyal under-secretary. Indeed, it is

Thomas Wentworth, 1st Earl of Strafford (1672-1739); and Christopher Layer (1683-1723), who was later prosecuted, found guilty, and hanged, drawn and quartered.

³⁰ SP 35/37/11A: 'we make oath that we evenly believe this paper to be written in the same hand with diverse letters which have been opened at the General Post Office since March last'.

³¹ SP 35/72/70: 13 August 1722.

³² Ibid.

³³ *Freeholder's Journal*, 16 May 1722.

³⁴ *London Gazette*, 12 - 15 May 1722.

³⁵ *Freeholder's Journal*, 16 May 1722.

³⁶ Charles Townshend, 2nd Viscount Townshend (1674-1738), inter alia Secretary of State for the Northern Department, 1714-17 & 1721-30 and Sir Robert Walpole's brother-in-law.

³⁷ *London Journal*, 16 June 1722.

³⁸ Berman, *Foundations of Modern Freemasonry*, pp. 138-43.

probable that this particular newspaper report was inserted by Delafaye in his capacity as the government's press manager.

So where do we stand. And how should we summarise. It is not unreasonable to believe that the new grand lodge was formed in embryo in 1716 and met for the first time the following year. The organisation began in a low key manner and with no publicity until it burst onto the public scene in a blaze of press comment in 1721 with the appointment of its first noble grand master. Grand Lodge subsequently gained traction and the number of subscribing lodges and underlying members rose to include around a quarter of London's elites. But what we might term the initial development phase took time and given the political framework that would have been good reason.

The men behind the new grand lodge were motivated by a strong desire to support the Hanoverian line against the threat of James Stuart and his supporters. The changes to the Charges and Regulations provide evidence for this analysis, as does the nature of the men involved – loyal men - Huguenot and Whigs – at the heart of the British establishment.

Of course there is also other evidence to support this thesis. In 1721 Desaguliers introduced himself in Edinburgh as a past grand master - 'late general master general of the masons' lodges in England', a phrase that owes much to the Scottish note taker. In the 1723 *Constitutions* Payne is referred to as a past grand master.³⁹ And in slightly later but nonetheless contemporary correspondence Richmond refers to his non-aristocratic predecessors as grand master by name: 'Anthony Sawyer, George Payne and Dr Desaguliers'.⁴⁰ All of these have been mentioned by Prescott and Sommers but not accepted as confirmations.

There is also the question of the 'Apple Tree' tavern itself. Between 1715 and the mid-1720s there were around fifteen taverns within a short distance of Charles Street whose names were or incorporated the words 'Apple Tree'.⁴¹

Many were within a few hundred yards with the closest, 'The Sun and Apple Tree', situated in White Hart Yard off Drury Lane, just to the east of Charles Street. The Sun and Apple Tree was in business for many years. It is referenced in the *Post Boy* as early as 1712,⁴² and in the records of the Sun Fire Office as late as 1788, when the licensee was a John Martin. I am not saying that Anderson confused his taverns. I will leave that to others.

³⁹ Anderson, *Constitutions*, p. 58.

⁴⁰ Richmond to Folkes, c. 1725: Royal Society Library, MS/865. The names are written as 'Ant. Sawyer, Geo. Payne, & Dr Dessys'.

⁴¹ They included 'The Black Boy and Apple Tree', St Martins Lane (*Daily Post*, 23 June 1720 et al); 'The Apple Tree', Little Queen Street, Lincolns Inn Fields (*Post Man and the Historical Account*, 7-8 April 1715 et al); 'Apple Tree', Cursitor's Alley, Chancery Lane (*London Gazette*, 11-15 November 1718 et al); 'Apple Tree', Wardour Street (*Daily Courant*, 11 July 1719 et al); 'Apple Tree and Bell Inn', Brewer's Yard, Hungerford Market, south of the Strand (*Weekly Journal or Saturday's Post*, 29 December 1722 et al); 'The Hand and Apple Tree', Little Queen Street, Holborn; 'Apple Tree', Leather Lane, Holborn; and 'Apple Tree & Magpye', Shoe Lane, Holborn.

⁴² *Post Boy*, 14-16 February 1712.

But leaving aside such details, I hope that this paper has outlined what might be accepted as the context for the establishment of the first Grand Lodge of England and thus the political rationale behind its formation and a probable time line that dates back to 1717.