

Ric Berman, *Espionage, Diplomacy and the Lodge: Charles Delafaye and The Secret Department of the Post Office* (Goring Heath: The Old Stables Press, 2017), 299 pages, ISBN 9780995756809. £20.00

Ric Berman's latest offering provides a fascinating insight into the intelligence war waged by employees of the Whig government against the ever-present threat of Jacobite plots and conspiracies in Britain in the early to mid-eighteenth century. Berman approaches the theme via two related subjects: the freemason, spy-master, Justice of the Peace, Whig and pro-Hanoverian under-secretary for the Northern and Southern departments, Charles Delafaye (1677-1762); and a key tool in the Hanoverian anti-Jacobite arsenal, the aptly named 'Secret Department of the Post Office' and its Deciphering Branch.

Berman begins by demonstrating how Anderson's *Constitutions* of 1723 saw important changes introduced into Freemasonry, including new Masonic ritual passages that reinforced loyalties to the government and monarchy.

Berman explains how the formation of Grand Lodge in 1717 (a date challenged by some historians) was in large part a political reaction to the extant Jacobite threat and, in particular, to the Stuart's attempted restoration of 1715. The illustrious Horn Tavern lodge (and several other London lodges) are shown by Berman to be bastions of pro-Hanoverian loyalty and he identifies several brethren such as Charles Delafaye, Thomas Pelham-Hollis (Secretary of State for the Southern Department) and John Lefebure (Head of the Secret Department of the Post Office) occupying senior positions within Walpole's Whig government (Robert Walpole was himself a freemason). These posts were concerned with national security, intelligence gathering, counter-surveillance, spying and the opening and decryption of suspected Jacobite or criminal correspondences. In addition, several Postmaster Generals and employees within the Secret Office of the Post Office and the Deciphering Branch were also known freemasons.

Charles Delafaye, a Huguenot, Member of Parliament and Westminster magistrate, a loyal servant to the crown and government, served as under-secretary to the Northern Department (1717-24) and Southern Department (1724-34). He was the conduit between the Secretaries of State and the Secret Department of the Post Office, a covert department created around 1660 for intercepting mail from international and domestic sources which contained suspected treasonable content. Letters would be opened in receipt of a warrant (which was often post-dated), the contents deciphered and copied if necessary, resealed and sent on. Berman shows the successful outcomes of opening suspected correspondence can be measured in the department's substantial contributions to the failure of the Jacobite plots of 1717, 1719, and the abortive but potentially serious Atterbury Plot of 1721. (Atterbury has now been identified by Dr Robert Collis as the 'Great Prelate' of the Jacobite Order of Toboso in England.)

Berman also highlights the important connection between some of Walpole's most trustworthy employees and religion, and most notably the employment of Huguenots within government. This was mirrored in the Craft, most obviously with respect to

Delafaye's friend and fellow Horn Tavern brother, John Theophilus Desaguliers, a man instrumental in the founding and direction of the Grand Lodge.

The second half of Berman's study investigates the use of spies by the Whig government, several of whom were known freemasons. It is well-documented that Walpole took the Jacobite threat seriously and ordered the creation of an international spy network to infiltrate Jacobite circles, gather intelligence, create subterfuge and spread disinformation. In this clandestine world, the identification and apprehension of Jacobite spies was a priority as was their turning, if possible, to become double agents. At the centre of the spy network stood Charles Delafaye, the Government's anti-Jacobite spymaster, who in addition oversaw the press. Many spies were freemasons, acting as part-time information gatherers rather than full time government agents. Berman gives examples in William Dugood, Vincent La Chapelle, Charles Labelye, Philip von Stosch and John Coustos.

Berman relates how Coustos was sent to France in 1736 following concerns from London that Charles Radcliffe, the titular Earl of Derwentwater, a Jacobite and freemason who escaped Newgate Prison following the 1715 Jacobite Rebellion, may have been using Freemasonry to advance the Jacobite cause. Andrew Ramsey's well-known oration of December 1736 gave further concern as it led to a proliferation of additional chivalric degrees with Jacobite associations. Within days of Ramsey's oration, Coustos had set up his own alternative lodge, the *Duc de Villeroy*, with some initial success. However, it ceased to operate following a police raid in 1737. Coustos then went on to form a lodge in Portugal, before being arrested by the Portuguese Inquisition in October 1742.

In chapter five, Berman looks at the importance and staunchly Whig composition of the Horn Tavern lodge and the lodges convened by the Duke of Richmond at Paris and Aubigny.

The remaining sections of Berman's study examines the combining of diplomacy with Freemasonry, and illustrates how the Craft was used as a pro-governmental tool to obtain allegiances with the aim of promoting national interests and providing security. Francis Stephen, Duke of Lorraine, is one case in point. The Duke of Lorraine was courted by leading aristocrats on his visit in England in 1731, including the dukes of Richmond and Newcastle. It culminated in November with Lorraine raised a Master Mason at an occasional lodge at Robert Walpole's country house, Houghton Hall, in the company of England's Masonic elite.

Berman concludes his study with four useful appendices which lists selected Grand Officers of the Grand Lodge of England; the members of London's Principle Huguenot lodges; the members of the Villeroy-Coustos Lodge in Paris; and the members of the First Grand Charity Committee, the standing committee of Grand Lodge.

Espionage, Diplomacy & the Lodge offers the reader a valuable insight into the associations between politics and Freemasonry in the eighteenth century. Berman demonstrates how passages within the *Constitutions* of 1723 were in large part a reaction to the extant Jacobite threat, and how leading members of the Horn Tavern such as Delafaye, Desaguliers, Payne and Lennox directed the *Constitutions* to reinforce the *status quo* by

demanding that a Mason be 'a peaceful subject' who will 'cheerfully...conform to the laws of the country' whilst promising 'not to be concerned in plots and conspiracies against government but patiently to submit to the decision of the supreme legislature' (*Constitutions*, 1723, p. 51). Alongside, Delafaye protected the Whig government and the inheritance of 1688's 'Glorious Revolution' through discrete but important surveillance aided by other freemasons intent on defending against the very real plots and threats posed by James Stuart and his Jacobite supporters.

Ricky Pound.