

Except in Extraordinary Cases

The Peculiar History of Master Mason Grand Masters, Provincial Grand Masters, and Grand Lodge Officers

Bro. Kent Henderson

WITHIN CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH FREEMASONRY, AND UNDER MANY other Grand Lodges, it is taken as received wisdom that to become a Grand Lodge Officer, one must have, at least, previously served as the Installed Master of a Craft lodge. It will come as a surprise to many that this is not true. The current (2020) *Constitutions* of the United Grand Lodge of England (UGLE) are completely silent on the matter. There is no constitutional requirement that a Grand Officer must be an Installed or Past Master. Furthermore, the English *Constitutions* specifically give the Grand Master the power to appoint any Freemason to any office as he may think fit. Indeed, this prerogative is not new.

The earliest constitutional reference to a Grand Officer appointment appears in the first (1815) *Constitutions* of the UGLE by William Williams. In the section ‘Of Provincial Grand Master’, article 1, we read:

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i. The appointment of this officer, for counties and for large and populous districts, is a prerogative of the grand master, by whom, or, in his absence, by his deputy, a patent may be granted, during pleasure, *to such brother of eminence and ability in the craft as may be thought worth of the appointment*. By this patent he is invested with a rank and power, in his particular district, similar to those possessed by the grand master himself. He shall be regularly installed at the first provincial grand lodge which he may hold after his appointment. [my emphasis].

So, we can see that the absolute appointive power of the Grand Master, and a lack of degree specificity, has existed right from the foundation of the present UGLE. Subsequently, this power has not been diminished.

Moving to the 1910 version of the UGLE *Constitutions*; we find its Rule 82 being corresponding:

The appointment of Provincial or District Grand Masters is a prerogative of the Grand Master, by whom a patent may be granted, during his pleasure, to any Brother of eminence and ability in the Craft, whom he may think worthy of the appointment. By this patent the Brother is invested with a rank and power to his particular Province or District similar to those possessed by the Grand Master.

Clearly, the Grand Master's power in this area is absolute, and if he so wished, he could appoint an Entered Apprentice as a Grand Officer, or even a member of any recognised Grand Lodge! The phrase is 'any brother', not 'any member' (of the UGLE).

But even these clauses do not end the Grand Master's power in this area. We read, under Rule 7 of the current UGLE *Constitutions*:

Brethren of eminence and ability, members of recognised Constitutions (presumably including the UGLE!) who have rendered service to Freemasonry, may, by appointment of the Grand Master, be constituted members of the Grand Lodge, with such rank and distinction as he may think proper.

So, to use an 'extreme' example, he could conceivably appoint an Entered Apprentice from Bolivia as a Past Grand Master!

An early example of the exercise of this power occurred at the UGLE Quarterly Communication held on 29 April 1863, when:

The M. W. Grand Master [Rt. Hon. The Earl of Zetland] informed the Brethren that in pursuance of the powers given by a recent Resolution of the Grand Lodge, he had conferred on His Highness the Maharajah Dhulep Singh the rank and privileges of Past Senior Grand Warden.

A further example is an appointment by HRH The Prince of Wales [later HM King Edward VII]. As then UGLE Grand Master, he personally presided over an 'Especial

Communication’ in the Royal Albert Hall on 13 June 1887, to vote an ‘*Address of Congratulation* to Her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen on completing the Fiftieth Year of Her Reign’.

At an appropriate juncture he said:

‘Brethren, we have among us to-day an Indian Prince the Maharajah of Kuch-Bihar. It affords me great pleasure to announce that I am going to confer upon him the rank of Past Senior Grand Warden.’ His Highness was then conducted to the Throne, where the Prince of Wales cordially shook him by the hand.¹

What the existing Masonic rank of the Maharajahs was is not stated, but there is no question they would have received preferment, regardless.

It is also notable too that in the 1910 Edition of the UGLE *Constitutions* (Rule 18) it is stipulated that ‘The Grand Registrar must be an actual or Past Master of a Lodge’ (*and no other officer* – my observation).

Thus, some 100 years after the Union of 1813, it is constitutionally specified, with that one curious exception, that Grand Officers can be Master Masons or even presumably, Fellow Crafts or Entered Apprentices.

Provincial/District Grand Lodges

It will be noted that thus far I have not mentioned Provincial/District Grand Officers; it is necessary that we distinguish them from Grand Lodge Officers.

Rule 60(c) i & ii states:

(i) A Metropolitan Grand Master by patent under his hand and seal or otherwise may appoint a Deputy Metropolitan Grand Master, and such number of Metropolitan Group Chairmen (to exercise authority over such groups of Lodges as he may assign to each of them, each such group to be known as a “Metropolitan Group”) as the Grand Master may from time-to-time authorise, to hold office during his pleasure and to execute forthwith all the powers and duties of such office in his name.

(ii) No Brother may be so appointed unless he shall have previously served the office of Master in a Lodge under the Grand Lodge.

This rule is quite specific, and does not apply to any other Provincial/District Officer. The only other relevant Rule reads as follows:

73. No Brother shall be appointed a Metropolitan, Provincial or District Grand Warden unless he be the Master or a Past Master of a Lodge, and the same qualifications are required for appointments to Past Provincial or District Grand Warden.

¹ *Proceedings*, UGLE, 16/6/1887.

Otherwise, UGLE *Constitutions* are silent on the matter of a Provincial/District Grand Master's powers of appointment. Other than the above exceptions, there is nothing to prevent the Provincial/District appointment of a brother below the rank of Master/Past Master to any other office, active or past.

... and such has occurred. One example is that of the noted British writer, Bro Robert Lomas who, as a Master Mason, was conferred with the rank of Past Provincial Grand Standard Bearer on 9 December 2017 at the Installation of The Lodge of Living Stones No. 4957, for his role in the 'Masonic Light' programme of education in the Province of Yorkshire, West Riding.²

Prior to smoking out examples of Master Mason Grand Officers, it will first be useful to examine the position of analogous Grand Lodges.

The Irish Position

Under the *Laws and Constitutions* of the Grand Lodge of Ireland (2019), we find that, firstly, all Master Masons are members of the Grand Lodge, viz:

5. The Government of the Fraternity is placed in the hands of the Grand Lodge, which is composed of the Grand Master, the Deputy Grand Master, the Assistant Grand Master, the Grand Officers, the Past Grand Officers, the Provincial Grand Officers, the Past Provincial Grand Officers and all Master Masons of Subordinate Lodges on the Register of the Grand Lodge of Ireland.

When it comes to Grand Officers, we find:

34. The Grand Master and all the Grand Officers, except the Deputy Grand Master, the Assistant Grand Master, the Grand Secretary and the Grand Master's Standard Bearer ... shall be annually elected by the Grand Lodge.

And then we find:

37. A Brother shall not be eligible for election to any office in the Grand Lodge, unless he be a subscribing Past Master of a Subordinate Lodge, and a Master Mason of at least five years' standing.

While, unlike its English counterpart, the Irish *Laws and Constitutions* do not bless its Grand Masters with omnipotent powers of appointment, they do limit Grand Officer appointments to Past Masters.

The Scottish Position

Historically, Scotland was unambiguous in the matter. Let us first look at the seminal 1881 edition of The Grand Lodge of Scotland *Constitution and Laws*, where at Section

² *Minutes*, The Lodge of Living Stones No. 4957, 9 December 2017. Personal comment by Bro. Tony Baker.

2 we read the following:

The members and Office-Bearers of the Grand Lodge must be Master Masons, whose names must have been recorded in the Books of the Grand Lodge . . .

However, when we then examine a more current (2016) edition, we find this clause absent and replaced by new Rules 4 and 5:

4. Grand Lodge is composed of the Grand Office-bearers, Past Grand Masters, Past Depute and Past Substitute Grand Masters, Provincial Grand Masters, District Grand Masters or their Proxies, Past Provincial and Past District Grand Masters, Grand Superintendents, Past Grand Superintendents and the Master and Wardens or Proxy Master and Proxy Wardens of each Daughter Lodge in good standing with Grand Lodge.

5. Every member of Grand Lodge must be a qualified member thereof as defined in Law 284.

When we scroll down to the latter, under *Interpretations*, we read:

284. 'Qualified Brother' or 'Qualified Member' does not include Honorary Member, as such. It means . . . as regards Grand Lodge – a member thereof, as constituted by Law 5, who is a Qualified Member of a Daughter Lodge in good standing with Grand Lodge and – if a Provincial or District Grand Master, or a Past Provincial or District Grand Master – is also a Qualified Member of his Provincial or District Grand Lodge, and who is in good standing with Grand Lodge.

It would seem, in a convoluted way, to say that, if you are a Scottish Freemason, you are eligible to become a Grand Officer if you are a Warden.

Let us now compare the positions of the Home Grand Lodges with several of their 'daughter' Grand Lodges, as examples, all of whose *Constitutions* were based on England's at the time of their formation.

New Zealand

The *Constitutions* of the Grand Lodge of New Zealand (2018) are quite specific in the pre-qualifications for its various Grand Officers, but nonetheless allows a Grand Master nominee to be a Master Mason, and arguably a Fellow Craft of Entered Apprentice:

127. Eligibility for Office

a. Except for the Offices of Grand Master, Grand Chaplain, Grand Registrar, Grand Treasurer, Grand Superintendent of Works, Grand Secretary and Grand Organist, no Brother shall be eligible to be nominated for or to be appointed or elected to any office in Grand Lodge unless he is a Past Master and he is enrolled on the Roll of Grand Lodge.

b. No Brother shall be eligible to be appointed or elected to the Office of Grand Chaplain, Grand Registrar, Grand Treasurer, Grand Superintendent of Works, Grand Secretary or Grand Organist unless he is a Master Mason.

South Australia and the Northern Territory

The *Regulations* of the Grand Lodge of South Australia and the Northern Territory (2018) state that only Installed/Past Masters (with specified exceptions) can be Grand Officers:

3.3. Except for the Chairman of The Freemasons Foundation, Chairman of Masonic Homes, Grand Treasurer; Grand Secretary, Director of Community Relations, Grand Superintendent of Works, Grand Librarian, Grand Director of Music, Grand Organist, Deputy Grand Treasurer, and Deputy Grand Superintendent of Works, only Installed Masters are eligible for appointment as Grand Lodge Officers.

4.1. Nominations for the office of Grand Master must be in writing on the prescribed form signed by seven members of Grand Lodge and by the nominee signifying his consent to the nomination . . .

6.4. Grand Lodge, by a resolution duly confirmed, or the Grand Master, may confer the rank of any Past Grand Office on any Installed Master.

Victoria

In the *Constitutions* of the United Grand Lodge of Victoria (2020) we find even more specific provisions – almost the reverse of England:

13. The Grand Master may, at his discretion, confer any of the ‘Past Grand’ ranks listed in Rule 11 (other than Past Grand Master or Past Pro Grand Master) on any Past Master of eminence or ability. He may also, at his discretion, elevate any Past Grand Officer to a higher rank (other than Past Grand Master or Past Pro Grand Master).

48. Each Grand Officer, other than Grand Lodge Organists, Grand Lodge Heralds, the Grand Tyler, Grand Directors of Music (MM), Past Grand Directors of Music (MM), Grand Organists (MM), Past Grand Organists (MM), Past Grand Lodge Organists (MM), Grand Heralds (MM), Past Grand Heralds (MM), Past Grand Lodge Heralds (MM) and Past Grand Tylers (MM), must be the Master or a Past Master of a warranted Lodge.

Thus, with a few specific exceptions, all Grand Officers in Victoria must be Installed Masters.

Tasmania

Similarly, the *Constitutions* of the Grand Lodge of Tasmania (2019) are exacting in terms of both its Grand Master and Grand Officers:

2. Every Grand Lodge Officer (Chaplains, Grand Superintendent of Works, Director of Music, Organists, Tylers, Trumpeters and Stewards excepted) must, except in the case of the Governor of this State, be a Worshipful Brother who has completed his year as Master . . .

18 (1) Nominations for the office of Grand Master shall be made in writing . . . provided always that a Brother shall not be eligible for nomination unless and he has completed a year as Master.

This reference to having ‘completed a year as Master’ is interesting, and potentially conflicting, as we shall see.

Ontario, Canada

The *Constitutions* of the Grand Lodge of Canada in the Province of Ontario (1887) enacted its position unambiguously early in its reign in its Rule 11:

11. No brother shall be eligible to any elective office in grand lodge, unless he has been regularly installed master of a warranted lodge.

Overall, the jurisdictions I have cited, to varying extents, limit who can be appointed to Grand Lodge office. Only the UGLE has a completely *laissez faire* constitutional position in this area.

The Recognition of ‘Significant Brethren’

As a corollary, it may prove useful to consider the development of Grand Rank under England. In his paper, ‘Past Grand Rank’, Bro. C. J. Mandleberg traces the history and development of Past Grand Rank from the eighteenth century, when there was no such thing, through to its later limited conferral, and to its more widespread availability today.³

In terms of the present discourse, a few relevant insights can be brought forward. Bro. Mandleberg notes that on 15 June 1836

a modest proposal was first put forward at a Quarterly Communication of Grand Lodge . . . that certain middle ranking Grand Officers should be recognised as Past Grand Officers at the conclusion of their period of service . . .

Even more interesting was that ‘shortly afterwards Grand Lodge resolved unanimously

³ C. J. Mandleberg, ‘Past Grand Rank’, *AQC* 126 (2013), 71–94.

to support an *unusual proposal* (my emphasis) put forward by the M.W. Grand Master, the Duke of Sussex:

That the M.W. Grand Master be authorised to confer upon the Moolave Mahomed Ismail Khan [all *sic* as in the Minutes of Grand Lodge], Ambassador from the King of Oude [also *sic*], who had recently been made a Mason in England, the Rank of a Past Grand Warden, and that he be presented with the requisite Masonic clothing.⁴

Here we have an early example of a non-Past Master, in this case presumably barely a Master Mason, being conferred with the 'Rank of Past Grand Warden'. Bro. Mandleberg goes on to note that 'since 1853 all designated Grand Officers (with the exceptions of Grand Stewards and the Grand Pursuivant) were now recognised as Past Grand Officers when they retired from active duty' . . . and that 'at the Communication of 5 June 1861 it was agreed:

That the M.W. Grand Master be empowered to appoint Brethren of eminence and ability to be members of Grand Lodge and to confer upon them such rank and distinction as he may think proper.⁵

This is the origin of the current Rule 7 of the UGLE *Constitutions*, and it would seem its intent was to honour 'significant men' who subsequently became Freemasons, although as already noted, its broad brush enables the Grand Master effectively unfettered power in this regard.

In having examined the constitutional provisions allowing Master Masons to become Grand Officers, the question becomes 'why so?' Can answers be found in looking comparatively into the genesis of the Installed Master?

The 'Degree of Past Master'

The origins of the 'degree' of Past Master, or Installed Master, or Passing the Chair – it enjoys several designations – would appear to be as obscure as the Craft itself. To quote Bro. Revd N. B. Cryer:

When our present Craft emerged at the end of the 17th century there was one degree, the Fellow of the Craft, which soon divided into two by creating the Entered Apprentice. Even when the new Grand Lodge was formed its first decade passed with no evidence whatsoever that any other degree was available or intended. Private Lodges were not even allowed to appoint or install new Masters except at, or in connection with, the Grand Lodge Quarterly Communications . . .⁶

⁴ Mandleberg, 'Past Grand Rank', 72.

⁵ Mandleberg, 'Past Grand Rank', 76.

⁶ N. B. Cryer, 'Is the Royal Arch Really the Supreme Degree?' in *What do you Know about the Royal Arch?* (Hinckley: Lewis Masonic, 2002), 53–4.

Clearly then, ceremonial for installing a Master, from the earliest days of the Premier Grand Lodge, was not seen as particularly important, nor even a lodge function, which in itself likely explains why in earlier times, as we shall shortly see, numerous high ranking Masonic appointees were not Installed Masters. Given the difficulties of travel in the eighteenth century, it is not hard to imagine that more than a few new Masters found it convenient not to present themselves at a Grand Lodge meeting in London to be installed as such.

Bro. Cryer also notes:

This is why, to this day, a new Craft Master is chosen from a lodge in the Fellow Craft Degree . . . As a result, there is a school of thought that the only qualification necessary to become a Grand Officer, even a Grand Master, is that one is a Fellow Craft.⁷

Nonetheless, the actual ceremonial for installing a Master would seem to date from the early eighteenth century, and possibly goes back to the 1723 *Constitutions* which, at p 71, sets forth the *Manner of constituting a New Lodge* and the same was found appropriate for the installation of a new Master in an existing lodge. It was the ‘abandonment’ of this *Ceremony of Installation* by the Premier Grand Lodge of England (‘Moderns’) that formed one of the points of attack by the ‘Antients’; although, as we have just seen, being installed was effectively optional from the beginning. It is pertinent to add that under the ‘Moderns’, its Grand Lodge membership was made up of Grand Officers and the Masters and Wardens of lodges, while the ‘Antients’ also included Past Masters as Grand Lodge members, reflecting its perceived necessity for Masters to be duly installed.

Bro. J. R. Clarke, in his paper *The Formation of the Grand Lodge of the Antients*, sets out details contained in ‘Morgan’s Register’ (named after the first Grand Secretary), which opens with the:

Rules & Orders to be Observ’d By the Most Ancient and Honble. Society of Free and Accepted Masons As agreed and settled by a Committee appointed by a General Assembly Held at the Turk’s Head in Greek Street Soho on Wednesday the 17th of July 1751 And in the Year of MASONRY 5751.

He makes a salient observation that the ‘Rules’ insist that a Master of a lodge must be regularly installed. He goes on to state that:

Attention is called to this again in an early minute, for it appears that it was often neglected by the rival [‘Moderns’] Grand Lodge.⁸

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ J. R. Clarke, ‘The Formation of the Grand Lodge of the Antients’, *AQC* 79 (1966), 270–73.

There were eleven aspersions levelled by the ‘Antients’ against the ‘Moderns,’ the most pertinent of which, to this dissertation, is the ninth: that the ‘Moderns’ were charged with having:

Allowed the esoteric ceremony at the installation of a Master to fall into disuse, although some of their lodges did work such a ceremony at an early date and continued unofficially to do so.⁹

The clear inference is that ignorance could not be claimed as a defence.

The Union of 1813

As part of the settlement of 1813 the record states that the *Ceremony of Installation* was one of the ‘Landmarks of the Craft’ – certainly contrary to the Premier Grand Lodge’s earlier position. By the Articles of Union of 1813 provision was made for a lodge to be constituted to consist of ‘nine worthy and expert Masons’ from each former Grand Lodge, ‘to instruct and obligate the Masters, Past Masters, Wardens and Members of Lodges in forms to prepare for the Grand Assembly for effecting the Union and for promoting uniformity of Forms, Rules, Discipline and Working.’ The lodge met on many occasions and the ceremonies agreed upon were rehearsed before Grand Lodge and, subject to some alterations, were approved in 1816. The records do not reveal the actual ritual rehearsed, which can only depend on the memory and accuracy of the transmitters.¹⁰

Thus, post-1813, a definitive Installation Ceremony emerged, although the form of the *Ceremony of Installation of a Master of a Lodge* was not finally agreed until fourteen years later. According to Bro. Frederick Smyth:

After the Union of 1813 and the consolidation of the Craft ritual by the Lodge of Reconciliation, a ‘Lodge or Board of Installed Masters’ was established in 1827 to pay comparable attention to the ceremony of installation and it is from its labours that our present widely-followed procedure is derived.¹¹

Thus, we have a ‘ceremony,’ but the question to be addressed here is: was it necessary for a Freemason to be an Installed Master to attain high Masonic Office? The answer to this question, historically, is a ‘definite maybe,’ or ‘not necessarily’ – as later examples will illustrate.

Back to the Beginning

Let us ‘go back to the beginning’ and look even more closely at the 1723 edition of the *Constitutions*, where we find in section IV on ‘Of Masters, Wardens, Fellows, and

⁹ B. E. Jones, *Freemasons Guide and Compendium* (London: George E. Harrap, 1950), 202.

¹⁰ W. J. Hughan, *Memorials of the Masonic Union of AD 1813* (Leicester: Johnson, Wykes & Paine, 1913), 27.

¹¹ F. Smyth, *A Reference Book for Freemasons* (London: Q.C. Correspondence Circle Limited, 1998), 137.

Apprentices', on p 51, the following:

... he may arrive to the honour of being the Warden, and then the Master of the Lodge, the Grand Warden, and at length the Grand-Master of all the Lodges . . .

But then, in the 1738 edition, in section IV, on p 145, this is expanded to:

The Wardens are chosen from among the Master-Masons, and no Brother can be a Master of a Lodge till he has acted as a Warden somewhere, *except in extraordinary Cases* [my emphasis]; . . . and none can be the Grand Master or a Grand Warden who has not acted as the Master of a particular Lodge.

This Section, while stating one must have previously acted as a Master of a lodge, does not specify that he is ceremonially installed. Another reasonable interpretation of this may be that while one should ideally be a Past Master prior to becoming a Grand Warden (read 'Grand Officer') or Grand Master, given *extraordinary cases* such is not mandatory.

So, what constitutes *an extraordinary case*? Prior to the 1813 Union, as we have seen, the 'Moderns' had no requirement for an Installation Ceremony for a new Master. One of its first recorded appointees as a Provincial Grand Master was Henry Price when, in 1733, the then 'Moderns' Grand Master, Viscount Montague, designated him 'Provincial Grand Master of New England and Dominions and Territories thereunto belonging.'¹² Price, in succeeding years granted a number of warrants to new lodges across the American colonies. There is no evidence he was ever installed as the Master of a lodge, and this is unlikely in his case, or indeed for any of his ilk prior to 1813, given the Moderns had no 'compulsory' ceremony of Installation.¹³

However, as already noted, an Installation Ceremony was 're-inserted' into the United Grand Lodge post-1813. But does that necessarily mean that from that time forward those appointed to high Masonic office must be Installed Masters? Constitutionally, the answer is no.

The members of Grand Lodge, under Rule 5.86, are 'the Master, Past Masters and Wardens of every private lodge.' Rule 18 sets out the Grand Officers whom the Grand Master can appoint. However, nowhere in the English *Constitutions* are any Masonic qualifications for appointment stipulated.

One would assume that appointees, at least, would have to be members of Grand Lodge; but as I have already demonstrated, the UGLE Grand Master can appoint any Freemason to any office. While, perhaps, a Grand Master could have, originally, relied on the *except in extraordinary Cases* provision of the 1738 *Constitutions*; today his constitutional power of appointment is absolute.

¹² *Coil's Masonic Encyclopedia* (New York: Macoy Publishing, 1961), 484–85.

¹³ *Ibid.*

Nonetheless in practice, in modern times, most would consider it unlikely that a Grand Master would appoint other than a Past Master as a Grand Officer. However, that has not always been the case, demonstrably in the nineteenth century, up to the early twentieth century, at least.

Bro. Sir Lionel Brett, in his 1989 Prestonian Lecture on the UGLE *Book of Constitutions*, noted:

In early years Grand Masters did not always regard themselves as bound by the regulations as to the appointment of Grand Officers . . .¹⁴

He does not specify what he considered these presumably limiting regulations were; and I cannot identify any constitutional ‘Rules’ that do so. Sir Lionel continues:

. . . and in the debate leading up to the 1884 revision of the *Constitutions* the Pro Grand Master stated that the practice had been ‘irregular and conflicting’ and that there had been ‘concurrent authority’. Since then, Grand Masters have followed the rules in the *Book of Constitutions* strictly.¹⁵

Just what he means by ‘irregular and conflicting’ is not elucidated, nor does he define ‘concurrent authority’. It would seem there were, at that time, identifiable issues with how Grand Officers were appointed, and these are largely addressed in Bro. Mandleberg’s paper, already cited. Nonetheless, as will soon become apparent, a significant number of ‘Master Mason Grand Officers’ were appointed post-1884.

The other item of interest is the statement that ‘Grand Masters did not always regard themselves as bound by the regulations’ – as has already been noted, then as now, while the English *Constitutions* specifies the Grand Officers to be appointed, but does not dictate that they must be Past Masters, nor does it prevent the Grand Master appointing any Freemason to Grand Lodge office, as he may chose – indeed it specifically states that he can.

A General Assumption

Despite the long-standing constitutional provisions giving the UGLE Grand Master unfettered powers of appointment to Grand office and Grand rank (which, as we have seen, also applies in a limited way under some other Grand Lodges), it has nonetheless been demonstrably the case that most consider that a senior appointee, at least, must be a Past Master or possess the *Secrets of the Chair*; not that that assumption was universally held.

Let us examine a pertinent example of the latter. On 3 March 1871, when he was Deputy Grand Master, Lord Carnarvon sent to the UGLE’s then Grand Master, the

¹⁴ L. Brett, ‘The Book of Constitutions of the United Grand Lodge of England 1815–1988’, *AQC* 103 (1990), 158.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

Marquess of Ripon, then visiting Washington DC, a list (prepared by the then Grand Secretary) of possible senior Grand Officers for the coming year – including Lord Cowper as Senior Grand Warden, although he was a Master Mason (initiated, passed and raised in Apollo University Lodge No. 357 in 1856 and then a joining member of its London offshoot, Westminster and Keystone Lodge No. 10).¹⁶

Demonstrably, Lord Carnarvon either did not know Lord Cowper was not an Installed Master (unlikely), or he did not see it as an issue. In any case, Lord Ripon did not act on his Deputy's recommendation. There is no evidence, however, that this was merely because Lord Cowper was a Master Mason; he resigned from the Craft (perhaps in pique?) on 7 March 1872.

An analogous question is: to qualify for appointment as a Grand Officer, even a Grand Master, should one be an actual Past Master (i.e: served a term as Master of a Lodge), or be merely be a recipient of the *secrets of the chair*? Being installed as a Master, it does not necessary follow that one has served the 'requisite year', or indeed any time, in the office.

Master Mason Grand Masters

Examples of *Extraordinary Cases* start at the top of the Masonic pantheon. Albert Edward, Prince of Wales (later Edward VII) was made a Past Grand Master of UGLE in 1869 after being put through all the degrees of the Swedish Rite over a couple of days in Stockholm in 1868 – twelve months from initiation to Most Worshipful. He did not join an English lodge until 1870 (Royal Alpha) or become its WM until 1871.

His brother, Arthur Duke of Connaught, was made a Senior Grand Warden in 1877 – three years before he was Master of Royal Alpha Lodge. To be fair to both of them, they joined multiple lodges and went through the chair of most of them and were both future Grand Masters. Connaught's son (also called Arthur) was initiated in Royal Alpha Lodge in 1911 and was its WM in 1919. He was made a Past Senior Grand Warden in 1914.¹⁷

Given the absolute social standing of princes of the blood royal, their 'rapid and unusual' preferment would be widely considered as understandable and of course, as we have seen, such was conveniently not at variance with the *Constitutions*.

In terms of the Premier Grand Lodge, of its thirty-nine Grand Masters from 1717 to 1813, the first four were gentlemen, but thereafter all were peers of the realm (a succession of thirty-two), save for its last three who were princes of the blood royal. Given the Moderns' lack of interest in a *Ceremony of Installation*, one could probably assume that most of these thirty-two peers, at least, were not Installed Masters.

¹⁶ *Ripon Papers* at the British Library, Add 43623, f.22.

¹⁷ Museum of Freemasonry, Information Leaflet No. 1: *English Royal Freemasons*.

Provincial Grand Masters

Bro. Prof. Aubrey Newman in his 2003 Prestonian Lecture, in which he outlines the development of Provincial Grand Lodges, makes several relevant points concerning their leaders. He says:

It is during the period of some fifty years after the formation of United Grand Lodge that there is considerable evidence of discontent about the quality of leadership being provided locally . . . Over and over again there are to be found instances of local lodges complaining with great vehemence against an absentee Provincial Grand Master and of his failure to work with, to consult, or even to acknowledge the existence of freemasons at a local level. Not least were the complaints that Grand Lodge seemed to ignore the need to appoint a new Provincial Grand Master after the death of the incumbent. . . . There were complaints about 'absentee landlords'. In Shropshire for instance there was a request made by one Lodge that its secretary should write to Grand Lodge requesting that a new Provincial Grand Master be appointed in place of the then incumbent 'who has been absent many years . . .'¹⁸

He continues:

. . . one of the problems thrown up during the middle of the (19th) century was clearly the way in which Provincial Grand Masters were chosen and appointed. . . . It was taken for granted that only nobleman of the highest rank and standing should be appointed as Provincial Grand Master but inevitably there were charges of favouritism and political partiality . . .¹⁹

Across all the Masonic Provinces of England and Wales, from their respective creation until World War II, 139 peers of the realm have served as a Provincial Grand Master, as well as many baronets and non-hereditary knights.²⁰ Who was appointed was clearly much more relevant, in many cases, than their existing Masonic rank. As a result, many incumbents were appointed as Master Masons.

Bro. Newman adds:

In 1860 a former Provincial Grand Master for Kent, an eminent QC, wrote to the *Freemasons' Magazine*: 'My appointment would not, I believe, have been thought of had there been a nobleman or gentleman, having estates in the Province and settled there, willing to undertake the duties of the office'. When one was appointed, the 3rd Earl Amherst, at the age of 24, his installation ceremony had to be interrupted so that he

¹⁸ A. N. Newman, 'The Contribution of the Provinces to the Development of English Freemasonry' (Prestonian Lecture 2003), *AQC* 117 (2004), 70.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 73.

²⁰ An addition, extracted from the *Masonic Year Book Historical Supplement* (London: UGLE, 1969): 'Listings of Provincial Grand Masters, 1717–1968', 18–33.

could be properly qualified by being installed into the chair of a private lodge before the rest of the ceremony could be completed.²¹

In the Province of Kent at this time, at least, there was a view that their Provincial Grand Master 'needed' to be an Installed Master.

Master Mason Grand Officers

Reportedly, the UGLE Grand Officers index – which is supposed to list every significant date for Grand Officers from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries – is far from complete and, inconveniently, it would seem that the higher the ranking the less information the cards appear to hold.²²

Nonetheless, relevant examples of Master Mason Grand Officers can be gleaned:

- James Brownlow William Gascoyne-Cecil, second Marquess of Salisbury, never served as Worshipful Master of either of the lodges that he was a member (Hertford Lodge No. 403 and Friendship No. 6) but was Senior Grand Warden in 1830 (one year after his initiation). He was later Provincial Grand Master of Hertfordshire (1833-1844) and Deputy Grand Master (1840-1844).
- William Hillier, 4th Earl of Onslow, was installed as Worshipful Master in 1889 (United Lodge No. 1629). However, whilst still a Master Mason he served as Senior Grand Warden in 1880, and he was Provincial Grand Master of Surrey (1895-1900).
- William, 6th Duke of Portland was a Worshipful Master in 1899 (Royal Alpha Lodge), but previously as a Master Mason he served as Senior Grand Warden in 1892.²³

There also several examples of exalted Master Masons appointed to high Masonic office and being installed WM in the same year, although without exact dates recorded it is impossible to determine which position they assumed first:

- Henry James FitzRoy, Earl of Euston, was appointed Provincial Grand Master of Northamptonshire & Huntingdonshire in 1887, the same year that he became Worshipful Master of St. Peter's Lodge No. 442, Peterborough.
- Francis Richard Charles Guy Greville, fifth Earl of Warwick, was appointed Provincial Grand Master of Essex in 1882, the same year he became Worshipful Master of Shakespeare Lodge No. 284, Warwick.

²¹ Newman, 'Contribution of the Provinces', 73.

²² Personal communication from Martin Cherry, Librarian, Museum of Freemasonry.

²³ UGLE Grand Officers index.

- Hugh de grey Seymour, 6th Marquess of Hertford, was appointed Senior Grand Warden in 1885, the same year he became Worshipful Master of United Lodge, London, No. 1629.²⁴

Colonial Preferments

South Australia

The first Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of South Australia, formed in 1884, was the colony's then Chief Justice, Sir Samuel Way. He was initiated on 13 October 1862, in the Lodge of Harmony No. 505 EC (later No. 3 SAC). He became a Foundation Member of Lodge St Alban No. 38 SAC in December 1889, and he remained a member of both lodges thereafter. Upon his election as inaugural Grand Master, he had yet to serve as the Master of a lodge. In order to overcome this 'perceived problem', he was 'installed as a Master' in the Grand Lodge itself on the same day that he was installed as Grand Master, on 17 April 1884.

He never subsequently served a term as an actual WM of a lodge. In 1897 he presented HRH the Prince of Wales (then Grand Master of England) with an *address* to Queen Victoria from all Australian Grand Lodges, to mark her jubilee. Concurrently, he was conferred with the rank of Past Junior Grand Warden, EC – despite the fact that he had never served as Master of a lodge, as well as being then no longer a member under the English Constitution!²⁵ Of course, under UGLE Rule 7, this was quite in order.

This phenomenon was not solely restricted to the English Constitution. The successor of Sir Samuel Way, as the second Grand Master of South Australia, was a redoubtable Scot, the 9th Earl of Kintore, who served as Governor of South Australia from 1889 until 1895. His family had long been associated with Freemasonry. His ancestor John, the 3rd Earl, was Grand Master Mason of Scotland in 1738. The 9th Earl received all three Craft degrees in one day on joining the Lodge of Edinburgh (Mary's Chapel) No. 1 SC on 2 December 1875.

This 'one day' procedure was not uncommon in Scottish Masonry in this era, in handling the admission of a noted personage. Kintore became the Provincial Grand Master of the Scottish Masonic Province of Kincardineshire just two years after his initiation, and concurrently Junior Grand Warden in the Grand Lodge itself. He then followed with two successive years as Senior Grand Warden. In 1883 he became Substitute Grand Master, and held that position for five years.

Shortly after his arrival in Adelaide he affiliated with St Andrew's Lodge No. 19 SAC, and he was immediately enjoined to become Grand Master at the earliest possible time. He was duly installed into supreme Masonic office on 30 October 1889, by Lord Carrington,

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ K. W. Henderson, *The Masonic Grand Masters of Australia* (Melbourne: Ian Drakeford Publishing, 1988), 31–33.

the then Governor and Grand Master of New South Wales. Of interest here, is that Lord Kintore was never installed as the Master of a lodge either in Scotland or in Adelaide, even though he held exalted Grand Lodge office in both. As noted earlier, there is no Scottish constitutional problem with a Master Mason becoming a Grand Officer. There is no record of Lord Kintore undergoing a pseudo-installation as Master, as Sir Samuel Way had done, and as we will soon see, several other Vice-regal Grand Masters.²⁶

The Masonic accommodation of prominent people still occurs in South Australia, at least, 'today'. A case in point is that of Sir Eric Neal, who served as Governor of South Australia from 1996 until 2001. A Mason since 1945, he never served as Master of a Lodge but, in 1999, he was entrusted with the *Secrets of the Chair* and, in 2009, in recognition of his contributions as Patron of the South Australian Masonic Homes and Principal Patron of The Freemasons Foundation Centre for Men's Health, he was conferred with the rank of Past Pro Grand Master. Sir Eric is currently 96 years old and a 75-year Masonic veteran.²⁷

Victoria

Moving onto the Colony of Victoria, its first EC Provincial Grand Master was Captain Andrew Clarke (in later life Sir Andrew Clarke KCMG). He had been trained as a military engineer and for four years had been Governor Denison's secretary in Van Diemen's land (Tasmania) when, in May 1853, at the age of 28, Governor La Trobe brought him across to Victoria to be Surveyor-General. He joined the Lodge of Australasia No 773 EC (meeting in Melbourne) in 1856. He must have been initiated in a lodge previously – details unknown – as his patent as Provincial Grand Master was dated 30 May 1853. In any case, given his age, he was certainly not then a Mason of long standing. At the time he received his high Masonic appointment, he was senior deacon of No 773. One suspects his appointment was occasioned by his 'social position'; clearly the fact he was a junior Mason, and certainly not a Past Master, were not a concern.

Clarke's patent did not actually arrive in the Colony until early 1857. He was installed as Provincial Grand Master on 9 March 1857, and during the ceremony there was a necessary pause while Clarke was taken into a convenient room and made an *installed master 'on sight'*. Shortly thereafter, Clarke returned to England, never again to darken Australian shores.²⁸

The 'pattern' continued: Andrew Clarke's successor as EC Provincial Grand Master was Captain Frederick Charles Standish; his patent was dated 25 February 1861. He had been born in Wigan, Lancashire, in 1824 and served in the Royal Artillery for a number of years, retiring with the rank of captain. He arrived in Victoria in 1852, having previously been initiated in a lodge in Dublin. He was appointed Assistant Commissioner

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 34–36.

²⁷ *Records*, Grand Lodge of South Australia; *Minutes*, Lodge St Alban No. 38, SAC.

²⁸ P. T. Thornton, *The History of Freemasonry in Victoria* (United Grand Lodge of Victoria, 1978), 21–22.

of Goldfields at Sandhurst (Bendigo) in 1854 and later in the same year he became the colony's Chief Commissioner of Police. As with Clarke before him it was deemed necessary to take him into a convenient room and entrust him with the *secrets of an installed master* before he was installed as Provincial Grand Master, on the 12 June 1861. There is no record of him subsequently being installed as the Master of a Lodge.²⁹

The third (and final) EC Provincial Grand Master of Victoria was the prominent pastoralist Sir William Clarke, Bt. (Patent: 1 January 1883). He was initiated in the Tasmanian Union Lodge No. 871 (later No. 356) EC (now No. 3 TC) in Hobart, in 1855, before moving to Victoria. He first came to Masonic prominence in 1876 when the promoters of the *Second Grand Lodge Movement* invited him to become Grand Master of their proposed new Grand Lodge. He declined, but in 1880 he allowed himself to be proposed as District Grand Master of the Irish Constitution, and he was installed into that position in May of the following year.

In March 1884 he was installed as the District Grand Master EC and as the District Grand Master SC on the same night. Thus, he became concurrently District Grand Master over all English, Irish and Scottish lodges in the Colony of Victoria. This unique triple appointment most certainly facilitated the creation of the United Grand Lodge of Victoria. Sir William received the *Secrets of the Chair* on the day he was installed Irish Provincial Grand Master, but he never subsequently served as actual Master of any lodge. Thus, when Sir William was installed as the inaugural Grand Master of the United Grand Lodge of Victoria on 21 March 1889, he had been put through the Installed Master's ceremonial, but he was not a Past Master of a lodge *per se*.³⁰

Sir William Clarke was succeeded as Grand Master of the United Grand Lodge of Victoria, in 1896, by the new Governor of the Colony of Victoria, Lord Brassey (1st Earl Brassey); appointed following a lengthy and mildly distinguished career in the House of Commons. He was knighted in 1881, and raised to the peerage in 1886, becoming a Lord-in-waiting to Queen Victoria in 1893. He was initiated in Apollo University Lodge in 1855, whilst studying at Oxford. On his own admission, he took 'very little interest in the Craft'. Upon his appointment as Governor being announced, in 1895, he was forthwith conferred Past Junior Grand Warden by the UGLE, even though he was still a Master Mason. In Melbourne he joined the Clarke Lodge No. 98 VC. He was installed as Grand Master while still a Master Mason (4 May 1896) – two days before he was invested as the Senior Warden of the Clarke Lodge! He was finally installed as a WM on 5 May 1897.³¹

A report in the *Victorian Craftsman* in 1939 claimed that, when the moment arrived for the Grand Master-elect to enter Grand Lodge for his Installation in 1896, Lord Bras-

²⁹ Thornton, *History*, 47.

³⁰ Henderson, *Masonic Grand Masters*, 157–59.

³¹ *Ibid.*

sey could not be found. A call to Government House revealed that he had forgotten. He prepared himself hastily and apologised profusely on his arrival.³² It would seem his interest in the Craft was not strong . . .

New South Wales

The first Grand Master of its United Grand Lodge, founded in 1888, was the then Governor of New South Wales, Lord Carrington (1st Earl, later 1st Marquess). His Masonic career is both fascinating and somewhat controversial. He was initiated on 28 October 1861 in the Sir Isaac Newton Lodge No. 859 EC, meeting at Cambridge, when he was just eighteen. However, given his perambulatory military career, he did not take his Second Degree until nearly eight years later, in Cairo. He was finally raised to the Third Degree in the Royal York Lodge of Perseverance No. 7 EC, London, in 1875. He joined the Royal Alpha Lodge No. 16 EC, London, in 1882, and remained a member throughout his life. He was appointed Senior Grand Warden, EC, in 1882.

When he arrived in New South Wales as Governor, he found lodges working under the English and Scottish Constitutions and under an (unrecognised) Grand Lodge of New South Wales. In an effort to facilitate a union, he accepted the office of District Grand Master, EC, and subsequently that of Grand Master of the United Grand Lodge of New South Wales.

Just before his Installation as the premier leader of the new United Grand Lodge, it was realised that he was not an installed Master. In order to overcome the perceived conundrum, an 'Occasional Lodge' was held at Government House under the charter of Lodge Ionic (now No. 65 NSW). He was thereupon, in effect, made a '*Worshipful Master at sight*'. Nine Senior Masons were known to be present, including Sir Samuel Way, Grand Master of South Australia. The exact date of the meeting is not recorded, although it must have occurred only a few days before Lord Carrington's Installation as Grand Master.³³

This development, though clearly convenient, raised several points of Masonic jurisprudence, even at the time. Bro. W. G. Kett states: ' . . . such an Installation, however, cannot be presumptive evidence of membership of the lodge in the ordinary acceptance of the term, despite the fact that His Excellency's name appears as a member . . .'³⁴

What is certain, is that Lord Carrington never joined any lodge in New South Wales, and that over his entire Masonic career he was never installed as the Master of a Lodge. On leaving Sydney his interest in Masonry did not diminish. He was appointed Provincial Grand Master of Buckinghamshire in 1890, serving for five years.

The Third Grand Master of New South Wales was another Scotsman, Sir Robert Duff, who served as both Governor and Grand Master from 1893 until 1895 – after a

³² P. T. Thornton, *A Century of Union* (United Grand Lodge of Victoria, 1989), 39.

³³ Henderson, *Masonic Grand Masters*, 79–82.

³⁴ W. G. Kett, *History of the First Fifty Years of Lodge Ionic No. 65 in the 1905 By-laws of the lodge* (Published privately, 1928), 26.

career in the Royal Navy and subsequently in the House of Commons. Sir Robert entered Freemasonry in Lodge St Andrew No. 52 SC, meeting at Banff, on 27 July 1864. Interestingly, like Lord Kintore, he was initiated, passed and raised on the same day. On his arrival in New South Wales he was promptly enjoined to become Grand Master, and he was installed as such by the Earl of Kintore, then both Governor and Grand Master in South Australia. He did affiliate with Lodge Ionic No 65 NSW, but he then he died suddenly, whilst still Governor and Grand Master, on 15 March 1895; he had not been installed as the Master of any Lodge.³⁵

The last Australian example I will deal with is the 8th Grand Master of New South Wales, Lord Chelmsford (1st Viscount), who served as Governor of Queensland (1905–09), of New South Wales (1909–13) and later Viceroy of India (1916–21). Like others I have discussed, he had a curious Masonic career. He was initiated on 1 June 1898 in the Lodge of Amity No. 137 EC, meeting at Poole, Dorset. He joined St Mary Magdalen Lodge No. 1523 EC (London) in 1900. This was an ‘old boys’ lodge of his Oxford college. He was invested as its Junior Warden in 1905 but his appointment as Governor of Queensland precluded any further advancement.³⁶

Queensland

Alone amongst the Australian States at that time, Queensland was yet to form its own Grand Lodge; this was not to occur until 1921. In Brisbane he found local Masonry bitterly divided between an (unrecognised) Grand Lodge of Queensland (GLQ) and the District Grand Lodge of Queensland, EC. The former (largely an amalgam of lodges originally warranted from Ireland and Scotland) was viewed as irregular by the United Grand Lodge of England. Lord Chelmsford took the courageous step of supporting the Grand Lodge of Queensland and accepting its Grand Mastership, thus adding the prestige of the Governor to its cause. In his own words he did so ‘on the advice and counsel of a brother who has held high office in England, and with the hope that it might conduce to reunion and a settlement of our unhappy divisions.’ The identity of ‘the brother who has held high office’ is unknown. Certainly, the advice was misguided. The United Grand Lodge of England took a dim view of events. Nor did it later ‘forgive and forget’, it would seem. Lord Chelmsford, alone among English Masons who became a Governor in Australia, was never conferred with high English Masonic Rank (PSGW or PJGW).

He had a strong belief in the inevitability of a sovereign Grand Lodge in Queensland, and his actions in resigning from both his English lodges would seem to support that contention. Unfortunately, the controversy that surrounded his acceptance of the GLQ Grand Mastership had the reverse effect of that intended and it was not until 1921 that

³⁵ Henderson, *Masonic Grand Masters*, 86–88.

³⁶ Henderson, *Masonic Grand Masters*, 98.

Queensland Masonic unity was finally achieved, although that can hardly be blamed on Lord Chelmsford. In addition, other aspects of his Masonic career provide puzzlement. There is no record of his ever being installed as the Master of a lodge. He was certainly a Past Warden when he arrived in Brisbane, if only just.

On his transfer to New South Wales he was elected as Grand Master and installed on 23 August 1910. Again, there is no record of him ever affiliating – he is not claimed as a member by any NSW lodge. As he had previously resigned from both his EC lodges, and he resigned all his Queensland Masonic connections when he left, he was unaffiliated with any lodge during his New South Wales Grand Mastership! Equally, it would seem curious that he did not join a lodge while stationed in India, where the craft was both abundant and a pillar of the Raj. He did, however, join Old Wykehamist Lodge No. 3548 EC (London) in 1923, remaining a member until his death in 1933.³⁷

New Zealand

The New Zealand experience was analogous to colonial Australia, notably with General Sir Charles Fergusson, Bt., Governor-General (and Grand Master) of New Zealand (1925–29). To quote from *The History of the Grand Lodge of New Zealand*:

It is interesting to record that Sir Charles did not become a Freemason until he was 59 years of age, and after he had retired from the Army. He was initiated in Lodge Fergusson St. James No. 566 S.C., on 16 September 1924, passed to the second degree on 30 September, and raised to the third degree on 14 October. Lest anyone should think that there is any undue haste in Scotland, the arrangements were made in view of his impending departure to New Zealand. He was thus a M.M. on arrival, and joined Raukawa Lodge No. 224 on 1 July 1925. On 28 November 1925 he was installed by M.W. Bro. J.J. Dougall as Grand Master, and continued in that high office until 1929 ... Like his distinguished predecessor Rt Hon Sir Francis Dillon Bell, Sir Charles was not a P.M. when he was installed as G.M, nor did he subsequently serve as W.M. of a lodge.³⁸

The Sinecure of Peers as Provincial Grand Masters

While there is no specific *job description* for a Provincial Grand Master of which I am aware, a regular attendance at UGLE Quarterly Communications to represent his province would probably be considered by many to be a responsibility of the office, certainly in the modern era. In the 19th Century, when travel within England was more onerous than it is today, one could, perhaps, excuse those in charge of ‘remoter’ Provinces from a consistent attendance in London – although most Peers had London addresses in addition to their country seat.

³⁷ Henderson, *Masonic Grand Masters*, 86–88.

³⁸ H. A. Lamb, *History of the Grand Lodge of New Zealand* (Christchurch: Published privately, 1940), 73.

I have, therefore, focused on an analysis of Peers of the Realm serving as a Provincial Grand Master in the counties within a ‘reasonable distance’ from London, largely across the second half of the 19th Century, in their attendance or otherwise at UGLE Communications (of which annually there were then typically five – four Quarterlies, and the ‘Annual Grand Festival’). In so doing we find that the following did not make a single appearance during their tenure:

- 2nd Marquess of Salisbury (PGM of Hertfordshire, 1833-1844)
- 5th Earl of Hardwicke (PGM of Cambridgeshire, 1872-1891)
- 5th Duke of Newcastle (PGM of Nottinghamshire, 1860-1865)
- 6th Duke of Newcastle (PGM of Nottinghamshire, 1865-1877)
- 5th Earl of Warwick (PGM of Essex, 1882-1902)
- 1st Marquess of Lincolnshire (PGM of Buckinghamshire, 1890-1895)
- 2nd Lord Addington ((PGM of Buckinghamshire, 1895-1909)
- 7th Earl of Orkney ((PGM of Buckinghamshire, 1909-1916)

There were a few who deigned to make one appearance only, such as the 10th Duke of St Albans (PGM of Nottinghamshire, 1877-1898) on 20 May 1880; the 7th Duke of Manchester (PGM of Northamptonshire & Huntingdonshire, 1863-1887) on 14 May 1870; and the 4th Earl of Onslow (PGM of Essex, 1882-1902) who attended on 29 July 1896.

To be fair, there were a small minority of PGM Peers who were slightly more diligent. The Earl of Euston (PGM of Northamptonshire & Huntingdonshire, 1887-1912) appeared sixteen times (out of 125 Grand Lodge meetings over his twenty-five-year tenure) and the 3rd Lord Tenterden (PGM of Essex, 1879-1882) appeared seven times out of a possible fifteen over his three-year term.³⁹

The data clearly suggest that ‘more than a majority’ of Provincial Grand Master Peers treated the role as a sinecure – in the 19th Century, at least. As the aristocracy ‘controlled’ the highest echelons of the UGLE in this era, it is highly probable that ‘official expectations’ were minimal.

The desire for Patronage

It now becomes clear that a primary aim of organised Freemasonry was its desire for patronage. This interest, continuing to this day, stems from its beginnings – as seen in the formation of the Premier Grand Lodge in 1717:

and, having voted the oldest Master Mason then present into the chair, constituted themselves a Grand Lodge, pro tempore, in due form. At this meeting it was resolved to revive the Quarterly Communications of the Fraternity, and to hold the next annual

³⁹ *Proceedings*, UGLE, 1830-1910.

assembly and feast on the 24th of June at the Goose and Gridiron, in Saint Paul's Church Yard, in compliment to the oldest Lodge, which then met there, for the purpose of electing a Grand Master among themselves, *till they should have the honour of a noble brother at their head* (my emphasis).⁴⁰

In his Prestonian Lecture, *New Light on the Formation and Early Years of the Grand Lodge*, Bro Dr Ric Berman concludes:

By the late 1720s English Freemasonry had become one of – if not the – most attractive yet accessible destinations for the Whig aristocracy, gentry and aspirational middling. Grand Lodge and English Freemasonry's more eminent constituent lodges were led by a parade of noble Grand Masters...Freemasonry had by now been positioned intentionally at the pinnacle of Hanoverian society.⁴¹

Brethren of Higher Standing . . .

This patronage by the aristocracy through to a succession of Princes of the Blood Royal, and leading Peers, cemented the primacy of Freemasonry as a social institution over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and well into the twentieth.

Bro. Professor Aubrey Newman in his recent paper *Grand Masters, Provincial Grand Masters & Provincial Grand Lodges*, points out the wide extent to which Provincial Grand Masters in England were largely either Peers of the Realm, or landed gentry, across the 19th Century in particular. He notes that there was a direct nexus between 'exalted' social position and high Masonic rank:

In 1870 there were in place 38 Craft Provincial Grand Masters; seventeen of them were peers, five were baronets, three were (untitled) Members of Parliament, two were Reverends, two were army officers, and nine were untitled gentry.⁴²

He goes on to further note that this 'desire' was unchanged in the modern era. 'A similar analysis ... in 1969 shows us that out of 42 Provincial Grand Masters then in post seventeen can be identified as being ex-military and thirteen as members of the nobility. One senior member of the staff at Great Queen Street (whom he does not name) recalled quite recently that:

⁴⁰ Jones, *Freemasons Compendium*, 169.

⁴¹ R. A. Berman, 'Foundations: New Light on the Formation and Early Years of the Grand Lodge of England', *AQC* 129 (2016), 216.

⁴² A. N. Newman, 'Grand Masters, Provincial Grand Masters, and Provincial Grand Lodges', *AQC* 133 (2020), 118.

The desire to have a local peer or magnate to preside over a Province, no matter how active or experienced he was in Freemasonry, with a strong Deputy actually running the Province, was still prevalent when I joined the staff here in 1971.⁴³

What to make of all this?

I have found no evidence that England purposely had a definitive policy of allowing Master Masons to assume high Masonic Office nor, indeed, the reverse. The clear thread that has run through English Freemasonry from its beginnings to the present day, is the strong and overriding desire for men of the highest possible social standing to be given, tacitly *quid pro quo*, important Masonic office – men of eminence, but not necessarily possessing the ability or interest in fulfilling their appointed role.

Their patronage was seen as far more important than any role they might be titularly given. Even in the antipodes Governors and Governors-General were thrust into a Grand Mastership solely for the lustre they bought to the Craft – quite regardless of any Masonic rank or experience they may have possessed or any real interest they might have had in the position.

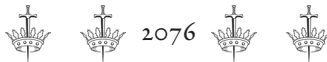
Thus, in ‘exalted cases’, such as the many examples I have listed, it was considered useful to turn a Masonic *blind eye* to the Masonic antecedents of such individuals – Master Mason Grand Masters or Provincial Grand Masters or Grand Officers were quite acceptable. Under England at least, there were, and remain, no constitutional impediments. While one might consider that the appointment of a ‘Master Mason Grand Officer’ would not happen today, there is little question that *in extraordinary Cases*, such could very easily occur again in the future.

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37. H. A. Lamb. *History of the Grand Lodge of New Zealand*. 1890-1940. Published privately, Christchurch (1940). p. 73.

Grand Lodges. AQC 133. p. 118.



⁴³ Newman, ‘Grand Masters, Provincial Grand Masters’, 119.



Kent Henderson is a member of Craft lodges in Australia and overseas, including QC Lodge, to which he was elected 2014. He is a Past Master and Fellow of the Victorian Lodge of Research, a former long-term co-editor of its *Transactions*, and holds the rank of PJGW under the United Grand Lodge of Victoria. Kent is also a Past Master or equivalent of additional Masonic Orders, is a former Fellow and President of the Australian & New Zealand Masonic Research Council, and was the Kellerman Lecturer for Victoria in 1994. He is also a Founding Fellow of The Masonic Society (USA). His many books and papers on Freemasonry include *Masonic World Guide* (1984); *The Masonic Grand Masters of Australia* (1989); *Freemasonry Universal – A New Guide to the Masonic World*, vols I & II (1998, 2000); *Millennial Masonry* (2002);

and *Famous Freemasons who changed the World* (2022). Kent holds the Grand Lodge of South Australia's Diploma of Masonic Education and a 250th Anniversary Medal awarded by the Grand Lodge of Denmark for 'his outstanding contribution to international Masonic Research.