



What is a Research Lodge?

W. Bro Ron Selby PPrSGW, SLGR, provides an illuminating account of Research Lodges and what they do.

A Research Lodge is what it says on the label. A Lodge dedicated to Masonic research. It is established in the same way as any other Lodge, it has a Charter from the Grand Lodge under whose jurisdiction it falls, is consecrated in the usual way, and has the same Officers as any other Lodge. What it does not do is the normal regular work that one expects to see at a meeting. No degree work, no Initiations, and members must be Master Masons or higher. The only meeting that might be recognised as “standard” would be the Installation meeting and this may well be reduced to the absolute minimum. One does not attend a Research Lodge to see the Ritual. The whole purpose of the meeting is to hear a research paper on a Masonic subject. Of course, the Lodge is opened and closed in the traditional way, but that is just a means to an end. The regulations of Grand Lodge require that all Lodges are to Initiate brethren. So, how do Research Lodges get around this problem? Quite simply, they make the Initiation fee so high that it would never happen. For example, Temple of Athene’s Initiation fee is £2500.

ALMOST EVERY COUNTRY

Research Lodges are not unique to the U.K., and almost every country where Freemasonry exists has its Research Lodges. For some inexplicable reason New Zealand seems to have more Research Lodges per capita than any other country and it is not really surprising that the USA has by far the most research Lodges, in total forty seven. The State of Virginia alone has eight and California five.

The first established Research Lodge was ***Quatuor Coronati No. 2076***, founded in 1886 under the jurisdiction of the United Grand Lodge of England and meets quarterly at Freemasons’ Hall, Great Queen Street. It takes its name from the Four Crowned Martyrs or ‘Quatuor Coronati’ – the traditional patron saints of stonemasons. Full membership is difficult to obtain and is restricted to the most serious and established researchers, though its Correspondence Circle is open to any Freemason. A book of transactions called *Ars Quatuor Crematorium* (which includes the papers given in the lodge) has been published every year since its Consecration in 1886. Most Research Lodges produce some type of transactions, proceedings, or just a newsletter. I will explain more about transactions and correspondence circles shortly.

RESEARCH LODGES IN THE UK

There are 11 Research Lodges working in the United Kingdom. In chronological order they are:

Quatuor Coronati Lodge No. 2076, Consecrated 1886, meeting in London.

Jubilee Masters' Lodge No. 2712, Consecrated 1898, meeting in London.

Sussex Masters' Lodge No. 3672, Consecrated 1913, meeting in Brighton.

East Sussex Masters' Lodge No. 8449, Consecrated 1972, meeting in Battle.

West Sussex Masters' Lodge No. 8963, Consecrated 1972, meeting in Battle.

Worthing Installed Masters' Lodge No. 9860, Consecrated 1980, meeting in Chichester.

Temple of Athene Lodge No. 9541, Consecrated 1994, meeting in Harrow.

Veritatem Sequere Lodge No. 9615, Consecrated 1996, meeting in St Albans.

And in Scotland:

Felix No. 355. Province of Aberdeenshire West, Re-consecrated in 1997, meeting in Peterculter.

The Anchor Lodge of Research No. 1814, meeting in Greenock, Inverclyde, Scotland.

The Lodge, Hope of Kurrachee no 337, meeting in Rosyth.

BACK IN THE PROVINCE OF MIDDLESEX

Staying closer to home, the Research Lodge for the Province of Middlesex is ***Temple of Athene Lodge No. 9541*** and takes its name from Athene (or Athena) an ancient Greek goddess who was the embodiment of Wisdom. It was Consecrated in 1994 and was the brainchild of Ron Hart. The idea of the Province having its own Lodge of Research was discussed with the Pro Provincial Grand Master, RW Bro Gordon Bourne; it received his immediate and enthusiastic approval and support. He agreed that the new Lodge would add lustre to the Province and it would fulfil a need to help the brethren to enjoy and understand their Freemasonry even more. Over the next year, other Brethren met to discuss ideas. Choosing a suitable name for the new Lodge was far from easy. Eventually, all agreed on the name of Temple of Athene. Ron Hart became the Founding Secretary and Simon Fernie was elected Master-Designate. Frank Glazer, who was then the Master of the Lodge of Harmony No. 255, said that the Lodge might be prepared to sponsor a new 'Daughter'. Eventually, 18 brethren signed the necessary Petition, endorsed in open Lodge by the Master and Wardens of the Lodge of Harmony.

The Lodge was Consecrated on Wednesday, 22nd 1994, at Syon Park, by RW Bro Gordon Bourne. Bro Fernie was Installed in the Chair of King Solomon by the Deputy Provincial Grand Master, VW Bro Kenneth Reed. The majority of the

founders were either members of Authors Lodge No. 3456 (London) or Lodge of Harmony No. 255. The only surviving founders are Michael Le Gray, who recently resigned from the Lodge due to difficulty getting to meetings, and the present Secretary, Ron Selby. The first papers presented that year were: *Everything has a Reason* by Simon Fernie; *The Raj and the Craft* by Laurie Leapman; and *Middlesex Matters* by Allan Beaver. These were published in September 1995 in Volume One of the Lodge Transactions, which was edited by Simon Fernie.

The humorous style of the minutes, in which nobody from the highest to the lowest is spared, was introduced from the start by Ron Hart, following the style adopted by *Authors' Lodge*. At the second Installation, Laurie Leapman took over the role of Secretary and continued the minutes in a similar vein; this was an Office he was to hold until his retirement in 2011 when Ron Selby took on the Office. It seems the Lodge has gone full circle as the incoming Secretary, Ron Selby, like the founding Secretary, Ron Hart, is Secretary of *Authors' Lodge*.

PRAISE FROM ON HIGH

Papers continued to be presented at each meeting, some of such a high standard as to raise praise from The Pro Grand Master, the Marquess of Northampton and receive publication in other Masonic journals. The Lodge was honoured a number of times by Pro Grand Masters for Middlesex; Gordon Bourne, David Cons and Roger Croome, who have all attended on more than one occasion; and on 26th October 1999, there was an unofficial visit by The Marquess of Northampton. In September 1998, the Lodge moved to Uxbridge Masonic Centre in Hillingdon, where it remained until 2011 when it moved to its present venue, Harrow District Masonic Centre.

The move to Harrow followed a pole of the Members and Correspondence Circle Members of the Lodge. The main reasons for this were the difficulty in parking at Hillingdon, and the fact that for a large majority, it was a lot closer.

The Lodge continues to meet regularly, and membership has been maintained between 16 to 20. Membership is open to anyone presenting an original research paper to the Lodge. Three members became Honorary Members; in 2002, Frank Glazer when he emigrated to Spain; Ron Hart, when his attendance at Lodge was becoming more difficult for him; and Elkan Levy, who emigrated to Israel.

WHAT HAPPENS AT A MEETING?

The Ritual is kept to a bare minimum and the sole purpose of the meetings is to receive a talk from a member or visitor to the Lodge. This can be on any Masonic subject and may include historical talks on prominent Freemasons, the history of the Craft, here and abroad, and the Operative masons etc. Although

membership of the Lodge is restricted to brethren who have presented a paper, membership of the attached Correspondence Circle has no such restriction, though one does need to be a Master Mason as some of the content of the Transactions may have Third Degree subject matter. The Correspondence Circle is open to any Master Mason and above who is in good standing with his Lodge, he will receive invitations to the meetings and Festive Board, and a yearly copy of all the lectures in the form of a set of "Transactions".

THE MIDDLESEX PRESTONIAN LECTURERS

The most prestigious award for a Masonic researcher is for one to be appointed Prestonian Lecturer. This award is given annually and is the only lecture given under the authority of the United Grand Lodge of England. The lectureship is a memorial to William Preston (1742–1818), who was regarded as the foremost Masonic educator of his age and who left a legacy to Grand Lodge to perpetuate his system of ritual lectures. The selection procedure for lecturers was altered in 2018 and the Provincial Grand Masters, Metropolitan Grand Master and the *Secretary of Quatuor Coronati Lodge No. 2076* now submit names of possible lecturers. Temple of Athene is proud to have had FOUR Prestonian Lecturers in its short history, Simon Fernie in 2001, Dr Mike Kearsley in 2014, Dr Ric Berman in 2016, and Mike Karn in 2019.

WHAT ARE ALL THE TALKS ABOUT?

To give an idea, shown below are some of the talks presented over the last few years:

The History of Freemasonry in The Balkans 1939 - 2017

The Temples at Jerusalem and their Provenances

The Swinging Sixties. Masonry Undone?

Models of King Solomon's Temple

Neptune Lodge No. 22 and how Freemasonry was conducted in the 1750s

Nelson and the Battle of Trafalgar

Gilbert & Sullivan - Musical Masons

Freemasonry and the Great War (Prestonian)

Cannon Law - An Accountant's View.

The Relationship Between Freemasonry & Philately

Allenby, Balfour, and the Rise of Israeli Freemasonry

Freemasonry in the Early Days of Photography

Famous Freemasons Who may have influenced your life

These days, most presentations include PowerPoint.

If you have any further questions about Temple of Athene, just get in contact with the Secretary, Ron Selby, at rselby@virginmedia.com who will be pleased to give advice and further information.



(Ed – W. Bro Ron has given a fascinating insight to how a research lodge works and the kind of subjects that are presented. Equally, we are charged to make the liberal arts and sciences our study. There is a wealth of books on masonic subjects which can be found at the Harrow Centre Library and from masonic publishers and elsewhere. The more we know about our freemasonry, the more interesting it becomes and we are able to avail ourselves of the insights of some remarkable Freemasons who have contributed to the vast volumes of masonic literature.)