

THE FREEMASONS OF WALES: 1799-1967

*A study of lodge annual returns
Made in compliance with the Unlawful Societies
Act*

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RECENT RESEARCH HAS THROWN INTO FOCUS A STORE OF AUTHORITATIVE DETAILED INFORMATION about the kind of men who belonged to Freemasonry and the lodges which they formed in England and, most especially, in Wales. It comes in official documents, ordered by national government to be sent to the Court of Quarter Sessions each year for almost 170 years. Under the terms of the Unlawful Societies Act, after 1799, and until March 1967, Masonic lodge Secretaries were ordered to send to the Clerk of the Peace in their locality a full list of members, with additional details, which occurred every March until 1967. Many of these documents have survived but few of them have been explored in a systematic manner until now.

The examination of these neglected - and in most cases uncatalogued and unexplored - documents is an important and immense task that is made all the more urgent because of the fragile and deteriorating nature of so many of them. It is therefore a race against time to capture their contents before more are lost. To make a start on the process, this paper examines, as a manageable sample, all the surviving documents that could be traced in Wales. Although it is a Welsh study and will have strong interest to those who are interested in the history of the principality, it also has important lessons for those who are interested in English social history,

as many of its discoveries and conclusions apply equally to both countries. The task of completing a study of both England and Wales is so large that it is beyond the resources of the present writer, whose hope is that this paper will stimulate the production of similar studies of specific regions within England too, and that these various studies might dovetail into each other and provide a more complete picture. Besides providing historians with a rich new source of information, it will also be of considerable interest to those engaged in the research of family and lodge history.

This paper is based upon part of a book that is soon to be published which describes the historical background which gave birth to the Unlawful Societies Act; the search for those annual returns which have survived, how they were dealt with by the lodges and the courts, and an examination of the information they contain. The book records how the primary documents were traced, photographed, transcribed, and placed on a database for analysis. It examines more than 2,000 annual return documents, which record the names, addresses and occupations of all the members of each Masonic lodge, year by year, disclosing the names of the lodges to which they belonged as well as where and when they held their meetings (see Appendix 1). The Welsh documents contain almost 200,000 lines of information about more than 34,000 individuals. Supplemented by additional background information on the lives of many of these men and their lodges, it is hoped that this book will provide an insight into the extent to which Freemasonry played an important part in the life of the nation. At the same time, it reflects and informs the social and economic developments which have taken place within Wales over the past two centuries.

For the sake of expediency, this paper focuses solely on the contents of the documents rather than an examination of their background, and it tries to answer three fundamental questions: who were the Freemasons of Wales, where did they meet, and how strong were their lodges? These basic questions have been asked many times but not answered previously with much authority. The complete database - upon which the book and this paper rely - has been deposited with the Library and Museum of Freemasonry at Freemasons' Hall in London and offered to the National Library of Wales at Aberystwyth, where it will be made available for deeper and more detailed examination by future researchers.

The growth and decline in the number of lodges that have existed in Wales during the period under consideration is recorded in various Masonic Year Books and the histories of specific Provinces. Good examples include *The Reason Why* (a history of the Province of South Wales) edited by Dr Peter M Davies¹ and *Freemasonry in Monmouthshire from 1764* by James F Hubert.² In addition, several valuable papers on the spread of Freemasonry in Wales have been written by Dr Peter M Davies³ and Dr Rob Hammond⁴ and published in *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum*.

Biographical information about members of lodges exists in the many histories of individual lodges.⁵ These are supplemented by articles published in local newspapers and several

¹ P. M. Davies (ed), *The Reason Why - a history of the Masonic Province of South Wales*, (Cardiff: The South Wales Masonic History Group, 2012),

² F. Hubert James, *Freemasonry in Monmouthshire from 1764*, (Newport: R. H. Johns Ltd, 1924).

³ P. M. Davies, 'How Freemasonry evolved in South Wales', *AQC* 129 (2016), 41-84.

⁴ R. Hammond, 'Freemasonry in North Wales 1727-1851, widely scattered and doomed to fail?', *AQC* 137 (2024), 177-224.

⁵ Good examples include: P. M. Davies, *Glamorgan Lodge No 36, an illustrated history*, (Cardiff: Glamorgan Lodge No 36, 2009); R. Hammond, *A History of Royal Denbigh Lodge*, (Ruthin: Finline, 2014); J. Fraser, *The Illustrated history of Loyal Cambrian Lodge No.*

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valuable online resources such as *Masonic Periodicals Online*, published by the Library and Museum of Freemasonry in London,⁶ the *Membership Records of UGLE*, published by Ancestry.com,⁷ as well as the *Dictionary of Welsh Biography* published by the National Library of Wales.⁸

Studies of the social composition of Welsh lodges are exceedingly difficult to find. Brief references are contained in many of the items that have already been mentioned but all these good resources suffer from the handicap of not recording changes after the day that a lodge was consecrated or that a candidate was initiated. The ability to track changes in the occupations and addresses of lodge members has been restricted thus far.

Beyond Wales, interesting studies that focus on the occupations and geographical movement of Freemasons in the West of England have been written by Professor Roger Burt.⁹ Extending the focus to more distant parts of the British Empire, the work of Professor Jessica Harland-Jacobs¹⁰ contains much interesting and relevant information. Both authors noted the important part played by Freemasonry in the lives and activities of seafarers, travellers, and colonists, especially when arriving in new places and seeking to integrate. Looking at England rather than Wales, the research and writings of John Belton¹¹ are also of interest, although the principal focus is upon the rise and fall of lodge membership figures rather than the types of occupation and geographical movements of members.

The Legislation

The formal name for the legislation that gave rise to these documents is ‘An Act for the more effectual suppression of societies established for seditious and treasonable purposes; and for better preventing treasonable and seditious practices.’ Following the French Revolution of 1789, the British government, driven by fear of a domestic insurrection, assisted by a French invasion, introduced a series of measures during the 1790s to suppress radical and possible revolutionary movements, most especially societies which imposed an oath of secrecy on their members. Among the most effective of these new laws were The Unlawful Oaths Act of 1795 and the Unlawful Societies Act of 1799. Together these made it illegal to impose an oath of secrecy upon anyone joining an unauthorised society, and they outlawed the main republican and nationalist groups. However, these new laws also caused the closure of many other organisations of a purely sociable, convivial, and welfare nature, some of which went under the title of Friendly Societies. The most authoritative account of how and why the Unlawful Societies Act of 1799 came into

110. (Merthyr Tydfil: H.W. Southey and Sons Ltd, 1914); and J. L. C. Cecil-Williams, *The story of Gwynedd Lodge No. 5068*, (Cardiff: Gwynedd Lodge No. 5068, 1949).

⁶ *Masonic Periodicals Online*, Available at: <https://museumfreemasonry.org.uk/research>.

⁷ *United Grand Lodge of England Freemason Membership Registers, 1751-1921* Available at: <https://www.ancestry.co.uk/>.

⁸ *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*, Available at: <https://biography.wales/>.

⁹ Burt, Roger, *Miners, Mariners & Masons*, (Exeter, University of Exeter Press, 2020).

¹⁰ Harland-Jacobs, Jessica, *Builders of Empire: Freemasons and British Imperialism 1717-1927*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

¹¹ Belton, John L., ‘Masonic Membership Myths Debunked’, in Arturo de Hoyos and S Brent Morris (eds) *Freemasonry in Context: history, ritual, controversy* (Lanham, Lexington Books, 2004).

existence was written by Professor Andrew Prescott in a detailed paper that was published in 2002.¹²

When first suggested, this legislation was especially worrying for Freemasonry with its initiation oath and so, before the Bill was passed, its leaders lobbied the Prime Minister of the day, William Pitt the Younger, and were successful in securing an exemption. The heavy involvement in Freemasonry of so many members of the Royal Family at the time (see Appendix 3), as well as so many other members of the Establishment, including a large part of the aristocracy and gentry, and many members of Parliament, must have been a powerful argument for rejecting any suggestion that the Masonic organisation was a cloak for republicanism and revolution.¹³ Thus, when the Act of 1799 was passed, it specifically stated that Freemasons could continue to impose an oath of secrecy upon candidates who wanted to join. However, this concession came at a price – and one that proved in the end to be a great blessing for us today as researchers – because the condition for being exempt from the legislation was that every Masonic lodge Secretary was obliged by law to send a return to the Clerk of the Peace at the Quarter Sessions every year. These annual returns not only provided a list of lodge members, but also their addresses and occupations, and stated where and when each lodge met.

While this must have been a great annual annoyance for many lodge Secretaries, it has proved to be a windfall source of vital and scarce information, a window into the lives of the brethren. Unfortunately, a great many of the annual returns that were produced because of the Act have decayed or have been lost, misplaced, or destroyed. Some, however, have survived and are now stored in County Archive offices throughout England and Wales. Together, the surviving annual returns provide us with a precious insight into the history of Freemasonry. What makes these documents especially interesting is that they thus record changes year by year. Sometimes the documents provide other information too, such as Masonic rank, academic, ecclesiastical, military, or civic distinctions. The returns also identify the Worshipful Master as well as the Secretary of each year and give details about them, as well as details of the founders of lodges (in the case of the first annual return). They also tell us about the development of the lodge, describing how it grew or shrank in size and when those changes took place.

Occasionally, lodges failed to notify the United Grand Lodge of England in London of some of the brethren whom they had initiated into Freemasonry, and who therefore had to pay the registration fee. Staff at the Library and Museum of Freemasonry in London acknowledge that ‘oversights’ of this nature were highlighted in a similar study of Quarter Sessions returns that was conducted in Essex towards the end of the twentieth-century. Principally they seem to have occurred in coastal and military towns, and it has been suggested that they may relate to transient people such as seafarers and soldiers who did not return to their Mother Lodge after being initiated to complete their degrees or paperwork. Regrettably the entire Essex study was lost due to a computer accident.¹⁴

¹² Andrew Prescott, ‘The Unlawful Societies Act of 1799’, in Matthew D J Scanlan (ed), *The Social Impact of Freemasonry on the Modern Western World*, The Canonbury Papers Vol 1, (London: Canonbury Masonic Research Centre, 2002, pp. 116-134).

¹³ Richard Gan (ed), *The Treasures of English Freemasonry 1717-2017*, (Addlestone, 2017), pp. 268-295.

¹⁴ Information from the Library and Archives of UGLE.

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Similar oversights have also been revealed by this study of the Quarter Session returns in Wales. Instances of names which appear in the returns but are not on the registers of Grand Lodge, include Israel Levinton, John Finnemore, Frank Peet, and the composer Joseph Parry. All are recorded in the annual returns of Indefatigable Lodge No 237 at Swansea (and there may be others), but none of them fits the seafarer/military theory since their occupations were, respectively, a clergyman, a manufacturer, an innkeeper, and a musician. These omissions might simply be a case of accidental neglect on the part of the Secretaries since all the ones just mentioned were members of one lodge and the oversights occurred at roughly the same time. Levinton was recorded as a member in 1881, Peet from 1881 to 1884, Parry in 1882, Finnemore from 1889 to 1892. Whatever the reason for their non-registration at Grand Lodge however, the value of these Quarter Sessions records is enhanced still further by their inclusion of men who were initiated but who have not been included in the UGLE records.

Occupational Groups

The annual returns describe the role played by various professional groups in the life of both Freemasonry and of Wales and highlight many of the traditions of the country as well as the changes that took place in Welsh life between 1799 and 1967. The picture that emerges from this account of the life of more than 34,000 men is the story of Wales and its development during the past two centuries. It reflects the important part which farming and forestry played in society and in the economy, as well as the part played by maritime activities. It also highlights the influence of the aristocracy and the gentry, the rise and gradual decline of mining, as well as the iron and steel making industries, the arrival of the railways, and the emergence of engineering, shipping, and associated trades as major employers. It also demonstrates the growing numbers employed in government and municipal activities, the development of public utilities and healthcare, as well as the part played by the legal profession, police, armed forces, and public services and of course the church. No less important a theme is the role played by the hospitality industry, as well as the arts, entertainment, sports, and the media. The documents refer to the war service of many Freemasons and to their role in civic and business life. These sections describe the way in which men from various backgrounds were attracted to Freemasonry and the influence which they played in the life of Wales, and how Wales influenced the development of Freemasonry.

Repeatedly the returns show that the availability of free time and financial means were essential for participation in this organisation. Its membership was not drawn exclusively from moneyed individuals, however, for the annual returns also record the growing presence of men of lower social status and the part played, for example, by trade union officials. Together, these annual returns document the important part which Freemasonry played in the lives of tens of thousands of men in Wales and they show how many who joined the fraternity remained members for decades, and extended their involvement by joining additional lodges to enjoy the companionship and networking opportunities that it provided. One of the most interesting of the themes which emerges from this analysis is the part which Masonry played in providing stability and continuity for many men as they experienced change and relocation in search of an

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income, and how for many who travelled into and through Wales it provided a haven and a social outlet. Their occupations can be summarised as follow; since most of the people in the database have multiple entries (because their membership is recorded in successive years and sometimes in secondary lodges) this repetition has been removed in the third column:

	Entries	Men			
			Merchants	1,912	400
Shopkeepers	29,280	4,200	Gentlemen	1,179	329
Engineering	12,309	2,210	GPO	1,693	311
Maritime	12,685	2,072	Architects	1,572	288
Builders	8,780	1,696	Secretaries	1,510	276
Healthcare	10,435	1,681	Misc	684	266
Education	10,087	1,675	Entertainment	1,290	250
Hospitality	7,782	1,412	Road Freight	1,207	241
Salesmen	7,824	1,359	Agents	508	199
Mineral	8,215	1,310	Printers	1,275	160
Legal	6,564	1,200	Gas	1,044	127
Banking	7,776	1,029	Media	318	100
Accountants	5,396	984	Journalists	560	90
Local Govt	5,233	909	Oil	511	75
Works	4,639	874	Buses	458	70
Managers	2,925	818	Analysts	410	65
Railways	4,989	727	Fire	316	55
Agriculture	3,638	696	Vets	426	52
Electrical	3,917	658	Aviation	308	47
Retired	1,500	638	Peers	333	45
Metal	3,421	633	Storemen	185	35
National Govt	3,544	620	Unions	172	34
Clergy	2,850	620			
Armed Forces	2,131	537	MPs/Party Workers	276	45
Police	2,916	525	Fuel	63	15
Insurance	2,984	475			
Clerks	2,000	450	Blank	2,379	
Motoring	2,807	431	Total	197,216	34,014

The Peerage and the Gentry

The annual returns contain details of more than forty-five members of the peerage and 350 members of the gentry who were prominent members of Freemasonry in Wales. Together, they span the full spectrum of the nobility from the great hereditary landowners to men with 'new money' and those who received their honours purely as a result of their own talents and service, rather than simply through inheritance. Many of them are listed and detailed descriptions are provided in the book upon which this article is based.

The lists show that many of them retained their membership of Freemasonry for decades and not simply for reasons of social intercourse or habit but because they were enthusiastic and active supporters of the concepts that underpin the organisation. Evidence of their attachment to Freemasonry is provided by the number who took on the responsibilities of administration within the organisation and discharged not only the duties of the Worshipful Master within lodges but also those who took on regional and national responsibilities and the following who took on the duties of Provincial Grand Master:

North Wales :

Sir Watkin Williams-Wynn (1852-1885), 6th Baronet,
Sir William Grenville Williams (1903-1905),
Sir Herbert Lloyd Watkin Williams Wynn (1914-1945), 7th Baronet,
Lloyd Tyrell 5th Lord Kenyon (1958-1990)

South Wales:

Sir Josiah John Guest (1836-1848),
Charles Kemeys Kemeys-Tynte (1856-1865),
Sir George Elliot (1876-1894)
1st Baron Llangattock (1894-1912) and
Sir Charles Venables-Llewellyn (1913-1938)

West Wales:

Sir Pryse Pryse (1867-1873)

Further evidence of the depth of their attachment to Freemasonry is provided not only by long service but also by multiple lodge membership.

National Government

More than 600 men who feature in the annual returns were employed in the service of national government at home and overseas. Principally they were employed by the departments

concerned with inland revenue collection and employment exchange, both of which had many offices within the principality. A study of those employed by the British Government overseas is especially interesting. In the Diplomatic Service they included Ivor Cyrus Edwards of Tredegar, who was described in the 1963 return from St George's Lodge No. 1098 as HM Commissioner for Pakistan, and Robert Jones of Rhos, whose address in the 1956 return from Wynnstay Lodge No. 3876 at Ruabon was given as the East African High Commission. Employed in government agricultural departments, they included Robert Johns of Aberdare who, according to the 1934 return from St David's Lodge No. 679, was employed at Zanzibar in the East Africa Colonial Service, and H. Ll. Pugh whose address was listed as West Africa Cocoa Research Institute, Ibadan, Nigeria, in the 1962 return from Gabriel Goodman Lodge No 4533 which met at Ruthin. The returns also provide information about men employed in general colonial administration in Gold Coast,¹⁵ Uganda,¹⁶ Tanganyika¹⁷ and Nyasaland.¹⁸

Local Government

Local government employed more than 900 people whose details are recorded within the surviving annual returns. In the earlier period, it was quite common for the annual returns to state that the home or contact address for local government employees was the Town Hall.¹⁹ This was in stark contrast to the civic attitudes that prevailed four decades later.

Clerks to the County Councils in Monmouthshire,²⁰ Carmarthenshire,²¹ and Pembrokeshire are mentioned as well as Town Clerks who worked for example in Aberdare,²² and Denbigh,²³ Clerks to Urban District Councils in Abergele,²⁴ and Blaenavon feature in the annual returns, as do the Clerks to Rural District Councils in Narberth²⁵ and Ruthin.²⁶ The names of County Treasurers appear in the lodge annual returns, for example in Denbighshire²⁷ and Monmouthshire.²⁸ Many Town and Borough Treasurers also became Freemasons, as at Cardiff²⁹ and Haverfordwest.³⁰ The Director of Education is another post within local government that figures frequently in the returns, and includes those with responsibility for Carmarthenshire³¹ and Swansea.³²

¹⁵ The Database of Welsh Lodge Annual Returns is held and available for use by visitors at the Library and Museum of Freemasonry, London and The National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth. This Entry: 3756/1948/149.

¹⁶ Entry 1752/1958/80.

¹⁷ Entry 3756/1939/43.

¹⁸ Entry 6671/1955/59.

¹⁹ Entries 0679/1934/10; 1143/1937/14; 0679/1901/38.

²⁰ Entry 2556/1929/96.

²¹ Entry 0476/1963/54.

²² Entry 0679/1936/14.

²³ Entry 4916/1958/17.

²⁴ Entry 6438/1950/12.

²⁵ Entries 2001/1945/82; 4533/1962/55.

²⁶ Entry 4533/1962/55.

²⁷ Entry 4533/1962/16.

²⁸ Entry 3762/1964/23.

²⁹ Entry 6729/1965/59.

³⁰ Entry 0464/1888/33.

³¹ Entry 4928/1961/52.

³² Entry 5567/1941/21.

Freemasons were employed in local government as architects, engineers, surveyors, parks and cemetery superintendents, housing managers, medical officers of health, land and estates managers, school attendance officers, town and country planning officers as well as many junior and middle-ranking clerks and general administrative staff. Interesting occupations specified include the Curator of the Museum of the Royal Institution at Swansea in the 1880s³³ and the County Archivist for Carmarthenshire in the 1960s.³⁴

Politicians

A significant number of Freemasons were actively involved in public service. In local government, elected officials feature in many of the annual returns and included the Chairman of the Monmouthshire County Council,³⁵ the Mayors of Swansea³⁶ and Monmouth,³⁷ as well as Aldermen³⁸ and Councillors in towns in most parts of Wales. In the 1948 return made by Dr James Griffith Hall Lodge No. 3161, the address for Sir William Alfred Jenkins, Lord Mayor, was recorded as The Mansion House, Swansea.

The surviving lodge annual returns also identify at least thirty-three who served as Members of Parliament. At its peak, in the 1890s, these men represented a third of all the Welsh constituencies. This group was composed of members of all the major parties including the Conservatives, Unionists, Whigs, Liberals, Labour, and Radicals. Seven of them represented constituencies in north Wales, fifteen in the south, and five in west Wales, while at various points eight of them represented constituencies in England and Scotland. The government offices which they held included those of Lord Privy Seal, Lord of the Treasury, Home Secretary, Under-Secretary for the Colonies and Postmaster General.

The following graph shows the number of MPs recorded in the surviving Welsh annual returns on a decade-by-decade basis. At its peak, in the 1890s, the total number recorded was thirteen, which equated to a third of all the Welsh constituencies.

³³ Entry 1573/1883/43.

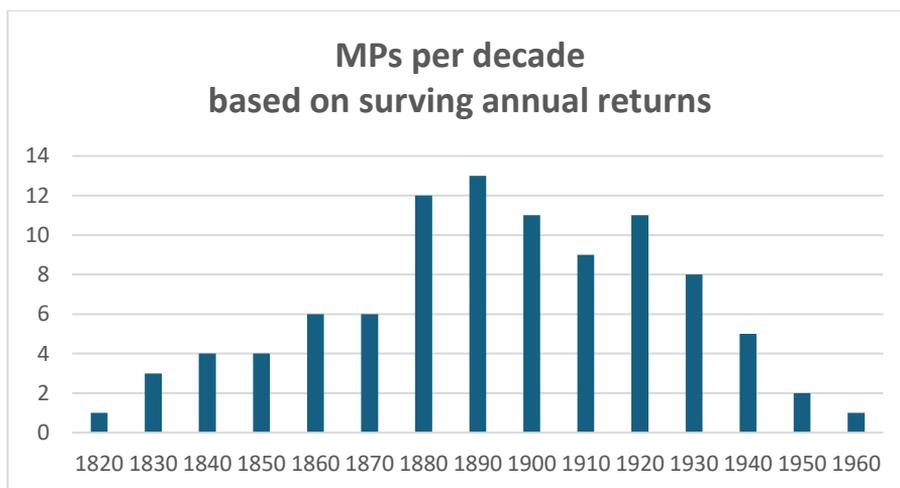
³⁴ Entry 4928/1966/54.

³⁵ Entry 1098/1908/28.

³⁶ Entry 1323/1871/16.

³⁷ Entry 0457/1896/42.

³⁸ Entries 1336/1926/8; 5636/1956/4.



Long and multiple lodge memberships, two strong signs of a deep attachment to Freemasonry, are indicated by six MPs (namely Thomas Meyrick, Windham Henry Wyndham-Quin, Sir William Jenkins, William John, David Alfred Thomas, and William Bulkeley Hughes) who belonged to two lodges each.

In 1848, the Province of South Wales was divided into two, for ease of administration, following which four of the Provincial Grand Masters of the Eastern Division were also MPs, namely Edward John Hutchins (1848-1856), Charles Kemeys Kemeys-Tynte (1857-1865), Sir George Elliot (1877-1893), and John Allan Rolls (1894-1912). In the Western Division, General John Wimburn Laurie MP, a very enthusiastic Freemason, having already served as Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Nova Scotia,³⁹ was appointed Provincial Grand Master of South Wales (Western Division) from 1897 to 1912.⁴⁰ Four of the earliest Provincial Grand Masters of South Wales were Members of Parliament, starting with Thomas Wyndham (PGM 1794-1814),⁴¹ Benjamin Hall (1814-1817),⁴² Sir Christopher Cole (1817-1836),⁴³ and Sir Josiah John Guest (1836-1848).⁴⁴ However, the first three men do not figure in the surviving annual returns.

A number of lodges found themselves blessed not only with the presence of one MP but also several MPs - and at the same time - which must have given rise to some interesting situations and conversations. While Patrick Herbert Crichton-Stewart, a Liberal MP, of the Bute family might have enjoyed the company of Sir Josiah John Guest, a Whig MP, at Glamorgan Lodge No. 36 in Cardiff in 1836, others might have been less comfortable. They include Vernon Hartshorn, Labour MP and miners leader, alongside Sir Beddoe Rees, Liberal MP, in the 1920s, and

³⁹ *The Freeman*, 17 Feb 1883, 81b.

⁴⁰ Province of South Wales (Western Division), *Masonic Calendar & Year Book, 1938-1939*, 40.

⁴¹ Davies (ed), *The Reason Why*, 23.

⁴² Davies (ed), *The Reason Why*, 79.

⁴³ Davies (ed), *The Reason Why*, 82.

⁴⁴ Davies (ed), *The Reason Why*, 93.

especially during the General Strike, at meetings of Llynfi Lodge No 2965 at Maesteg; or perhaps Sir George Elliot, Conservative MP, and Aeneas McIntyre, Liberal MP, at Talbot Lodge No. 1323 in the 1890s in Swansea. The fraternal message of Freemasonry appears to have prevailed.

The Legal Profession

The annual returns refer to many men who worked in the legal profession, including 1,200 men who worked in the courts, its offices, and agencies. They consisted of judges, County Court Registrars, Justices of the Peace (both as stipendiary and as lay magistrates), coroners, and at least 75 barristers and almost 900 solicitors – as well as Clerks to the Justices, court officials, and prison officers. Ironically, the annual returns which were sent every year to the Clerks of the Peace also included the names and details of the magistrates and court officials to whom they were addressed. Examples include Thomas Hughes who was Clerk of the Peace at Newport and a member of Glyn Ebbw Lodge No 2556 (1922-1927), and Edward Parry who was Clerk of the Peace at Ruthin and a member of Royal Denbigh Lodge No. 1143 (1917-1930). Gwilym Williams, the Chairman of Glamorgan Quarter Sessions, was a member of St David's Lodge No. 679, a Founder of Merlin Lodge No. 1579 in Pontypridd. Trevor Kelway, the longest-serving Provincial Grand Master of the Craft Province of South Wales, Western Division, a post which he held for 41 years (1945-1986) was the Deputy Chairman of the Quarter Sessions in Pembrokeshire.

Police Officers

One of the large professional groups listed in the surviving annual returns consisted of Police Officers. It was a group which contained 525 officers, who were spread evenly across the period and over Wales. The fact that over sixty per-cent of them were in the higher ranks, including nine Chief Constables, underlines the elitist image which Freemasonry enjoyed and is also perhaps a reflection of disposable income. It is apparent that a large number of Police Officers were moved, or chose to move, to other locations during their employment, and for many of them this also involved joining another lodge in a new locality. Dozens of them, for example, moved to London to work for the Metropolitan Police, while others transferred to the English Midlands, and a significant number moved to work abroad. Owing to relocation, a significant number of officers belonged to more than one lodge at the same time. A great many of these men worked not only in Welsh Constabularies but also in HM Dockyards (especially at Pembroke and Chatham),⁴⁵ the Royal Arsenal at Woolwich,⁴⁶ the War Department,⁴⁷ on the railways,⁴⁸ and as Court Bailiffs.⁴⁹ More than a hundred worked as security officers, mainly in the coalmining and steelmaking industries.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Entry 0990/1911/111 (Harold Beard); and 0378/1900/75 (David Thomas).

⁴⁶ Entry 0378/1896/19 (Alexander Creighton).

⁴⁷ Entry 6299/1960/95 (Insp. Samuel Jackson).

⁴⁸ Entry 3977/1939/143 (Sgt. Archibald Jordan).

⁴⁹ Entry 3979/1939/45 (Frederick William Batt).

⁵⁰ Entry 6298/1952/47 (Sgt. Philip Edwards); 0833/1937/118 (Sgt. Evan Jones).

The Armed Forces

Members of the Armed Forces were listed within the annual returns which describe at least 537 Freemasons, of whom 332 were soldiers, 119 were serving in the Royal Navy, and 86 were enrolled in the Royal Air Force. These were professional servicemen, and these figures do not attempt to include National Service men or conscripts.

The returns record that Welsh Freemasons served at ‘The Front’ during the Boer War, The First and Second World Wars, as well as in the British Army of the Rhine and in numerous other military actions. They also include several references to lodge members who were held as a Prisoner of War. Decorations awarded to army members and cited in the lodge annual returns include *DSO*, *MC*, *MM*, *DSC*, *TD*, *MBE*, and *OBE* but the most highly decorated was Major Tasker Watkins of The Welch Regiment, who in 1944 was awarded the Victoria Cross. He was initiated in South Wales Jurists Lodge No. 7092 in 1951⁵¹ and his membership continued to be recorded in the annual return for 1957.⁵²

Clergymen

Religious leaders frequently appear within the documents, which describe 620 clergymen who were members of 105 lodges, spread right across Wales, 21 being in the north and 85 in the more populous south. Owing to the fact that many of these men were simply described in the returns as clergymen or ministers, it is difficult to be sure which religious denomination many of them belonged to but, of those who were more clearly described, at least 140 were Anglican. These included a bishop, four archdeacons, twelve canons, a rural dean, and dozens of rectors and vicars, as well as naval, army and prison chaplains, and numerous clerical schoolmasters. Of the rest, seventeen were Congregationalists, eleven Baptists, eight Presbyterian, two ‘Non-Conformists’, one was described as Unitarian, five were rabbis, including a President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews.⁵³ The cross-denominational appeal of Freemasonry was illustrated in the 1945 annual return that was submitted by Trisant Lodge No. 4154 at Pontyclun, which included two vicars as well as Methodist and Baptist ministers.⁵⁴

It appears that long-service in Freemasonry was especially strong among clergymen, as demonstrated by Revd David Bowen, of Newport, a member of Kennard Lodge No. 1258 at Pontypool who was a Freemason for fifty-five years from 1873 to 1927; four others were members for more than thirty years, while a further twenty were members for well over twenty years. A reminder that not all ministers were ‘as poor as a Church Mouse’ was provided by an intriguing entry in 1920, which records that the Revd David Jones Williams of Rhyd y bill Rhewl was also a colliery proprietor.⁵⁵

⁵¹ G. Angell, *Volume of Valour*, (Privately published, 2017), 593-596.

⁵² Entry 7092/1957/24.

⁵³ Entry 6671/1953/28.

⁵⁴ *Entries* (John Jones Davies) 4154/1945/25, (John Owen Williams) 4154/1945/148, (David Thomas Morgan) 4154/1945/99 and (Thomas Trevor Evans) 4154/1945/43.

⁵⁵ Entry 1143/1920/36.

Architects

In addition to the architects already referred to under the heading of Local Government employees, a further 288 architects can be found in the annual returns. Two-thirds of these entries began before 1918 and serve to illustrate a strong middle-class presence within Freemasonry during the earlier period. Their addresses were widely spread across Wales but the biggest concentrations were in Cardiff (forty-eight), Swansea (twenty-three), Neath (seventeen), Wrexham (fifteen), Newport Monmouthshire (fourteen), and Pontypridd (ten). Naturally, many of them moved to distant places in the course of their career, especially, as the records show, to London,⁵⁶ Manchester,⁵⁷ Birmingham⁵⁸ and Hull⁵⁹ but also to more distant places such as Denmark, Palestine,⁶⁰ Rhodesia,⁶¹ Calcutta,⁶² and Australia.⁶³ Freemasonry in Wales attracted many distinguished and accomplished architects - whose achievements included construction of the University College of Wales building in Aberystwyth, the Cardiff Coal and Shipping Exchange as well as the Royal Arcade in Cardiff, the Brangwyn Hall in Swansea, Merthyr Tydfil Town Hall, Swansea Harbour Trust Offices, Barry Memorial Hall, and the old *Western Mail* building in Cardiff.

Education

Members of the teaching profession and academia formed one of the largest groups to figure in the lodge annual returns. They numbered at least 1,675 men. The overwhelming majority were employed in schools as teachers (1,396), with another one hundred and sixteen headmasters and twenty as schools inspectors. In many cases the returns stated the specialist subject which many of these men taught. The main ones mentioned were physical training, handicrafts, art, French, science, geology, and a strong representation for Music. Some were employed at specialist institutions such as schools for truants, as well as schools for blind and deaf children, and at training centres in industry and the navy. In higher education, they included thirty-one university professors, twenty university lecturers, as well as twenty two college principals and more than seventy college lecturers.

Healthcare

The annual returns contain details of more than 1,680 men who were employed in the medical profession. Doctors, who accounted for almost half of the people in this category, included consultants, surgeons, physicians, and general practitioners. These men were spread right across Wales, often working in local clinics and general practice but also at many hospitals. Some worked in the armed forces, like Surgeon-Major Henry Lawrence, who was a member (1880-

⁵⁶ Entries 1369/1878/33; 0457/1884/39; 3161/1945/128.

⁵⁷ Entry 1369/1878/33 and 2556/1928/107.

⁵⁸ Entry 1369/1878/33 and 1754/1953/140.

⁵⁹ Entry 1369/1878/33 and 5461/1958/75.

⁶⁰ Entry 1369/1878/33 and 4172/1941/65.

⁶¹ Entry 1369/1878/33 and 6624/1949/30.

⁶² Entry 1369/1878/33 and 3876/1949/74.

⁶³ Entry 1369/1878/33 and 2357/1959/167.

85) of Tenby Lodge No. 1177, and Richard Morgan of Newport, decorated with the Military Cross, who was a member (1935-62) of Jasper Tudor Lodge No. 4074.

The second largest occupational group within the medical field consisted of men described variously as chemists, pharmacists, and druggists. They were employed both at hospitals and in high street shops. The latter included both proprietors and, as multiple stores increased, branch managers. Their presence was spread evenly right across Wales and it is noticeable that from the mid-1930s they diversified their businesses, in many cases, to become opticians as well.⁶⁴

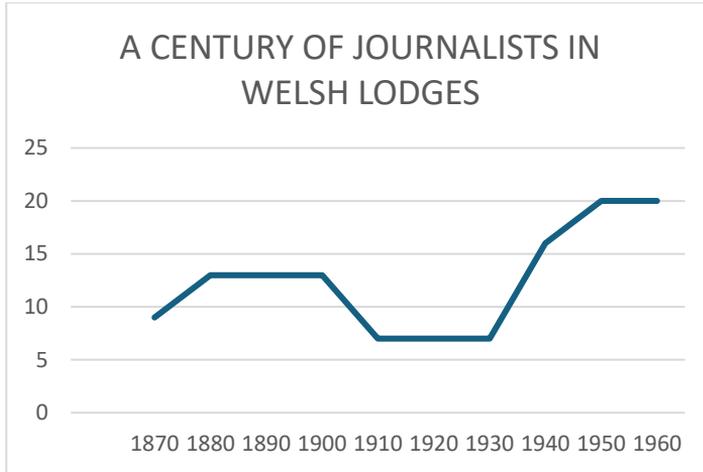
The returns reveal a high number of young men from the medical profession who came into Freemasonry. Generally, Freemasonry was regarded as an activity with a strong appeal for men of more mature years and so it is quite unusual, in Welsh lodge returns, to find someone described as a student. However, the details of ten such men are to be found within the medical category.⁶⁵ The membership embraced many outstanding figures who included Dr John Williams, a successful physician, who rose in his profession eventually to establish a practice in Harley Street, London and was appointed as one of Queen Victoria's doctors. He was a vigorous campaigner for the eradication of tuberculosis in Wales and he was knighted for his medical services in 1894, becoming Sir John Williams, 1st Baronet, of the City of London.

The Press

During 'the witch hunt' of Freemasonry that was conducted by the press in the 1980s, many people came to the conclusion that very little affection existed between journalists and Freemasons and that they were poles apart. However, a study of the Quarter Sessions records contradicts that perception and reveals that a significant number of journalists were members of Freemasonry and that this was the reality right across the spectrum of both time and space. The surviving annual returns show that more than a hundred men in Wales were described as journalists or editors. From the long-standing and committed nature of their connection, one may assume that it was one that they enjoyed and that they felt at home with.

⁶⁴ Entry 3769/1937/56; and 5968/1950/58.

⁶⁵ Entries 1578/1893/93; 1754/1893/101; 4154/1924/69.



When placed on the time spectrum, the data for journalists who were members of Masonic Lodges in Wales, does not suggest any decline in interest between 1870 and 1970. Even allowing for the fact that recent documents have survived in greater numbers, a cautious view would suggest that the picture which emerges is one of a stable involvement, at the very least, if not strong growth in fact. Among those who held senior positions in their profession were Jack Nener, who for eight years (1953-1961) was the Editor of *The Daily Mirror*, a newspaper which then boasted Britain's largest circulation. He was listed as a member of Penllergaer Lodge No 5567 in Swansea (1941-1950). Another high-flyer was William J. Davies, who rose to become the Assistant Editor of *The Observer*, which was one of Britain's most respected national Sunday quality newspapers. He was listed as a member of Hen Bont Lodge No. 4691 in Pontypridd (1961-1966). At least fifteen of the 110 journalists mentioned in the Welsh returns were described as an 'Editor'.

Engineers

The surviving annual returns provide details of at least 2,210 engineers. In total, they were members of 122 lodges, spread right across Wales. Civil and mechanical engineering dominated the list of occupations, followed by draughtsmen, boilermakers/blacksmiths, and fitters, as well as consulting engineers. Many of these men were obliged to work away from home on major projects for long periods of time, and that too is reflected in the returns.

The returns also reveal details of men passing through Wales, who joined Freemasonry en-route. One such was James Easthope, an engineer, born at Padstow in Cornwall, who joined the Merchant Navy in 1879 and ten years later was initiated in Cardiff in Bute Lodge No. 960; he remained a subscribing member until 1909. The subsequent addresses given for him in the returns of Bute Lodge include Sunderland in 1891 and Barrow-in-Furness in 1909. While at Barrow-in-Furness, he not only retained his membership of his lodge in Cardiff, but he also joined the local Hartington Lodge No. 1021 in 1894.

The returns provide details of a great many men whose work took them overseas for long periods, moving from one country to another, and undertaking a series of assignments. They included men like Arthur E. R. Thomas, engineer, a member (1938-49) of Square and Compass Lodge No. 1336 of Wrexham, who was employed in Singapore, then Perth in Australia, and Pretoria in South Africa. Granville Richard Henry, engineer, was a member (1899-1908) of Baglan Lodge No. 6079, who was employed in Valparaiso in Chile and later at Lima in Peru. Why did so many men continue to pay annual subscriptions to their Welsh lodges long after leaving the UK? In some cases, this continued for decades, as was the case, for example, with John James Rogers, an engineer, who lived at Barry, then Liverpool, and later at Swansea, and who was a member of Barry Lodge No. 2357 from 1903 to 1953, despite having left Barry in 1910. It suggests that lodge membership was a highly valued possession which they treasured. Possibly it was not just status and nostalgia however that were at work here. Continuous membership would also have made it easier for such men to attend and to join other lodges on their travels overseas.

Iron, Steel and metal production

Although the production of metal was one of the leading sectors in the Welsh economy and a major employer in Wales, throughout this period, it is not so strongly represented as one might expect in the lodge annual returns, and relates to just 633 men. It may be that low wages in the past or the difficulties of balancing shift-working and regular lodge attendance had a part to play in explaining this conundrum. More research is needed to fully understand this question. What is clear from the returns, however, is that seventy-five per-cent of the 633 Freemasons held senior manufacturing positions, covering mainly the iron and steel industries but also tinsplate, nickel, copper, brass, and zinc production. One hundred of them were described in the returns as owners, ironmasters or metal manufacturers and seven were 'directors'. On the next level were 176 managers, plus 115 metallurgists and 54 foremen. The latter group appeared under a variety of titles, besides metallurgist, including metallurgical chemist, analytical chemist, analyst, assayer, and steelworks sample-passer. In addition, there were 98 men in a variety of other associated occupations, plus 83 men involved in sales of one kind or another, who were described variously as a metal merchant, forge agent, metal agent, steel representative, steel distributor, and scrap metal merchant. The list of lodge members who were the major owners of these plants includes many of the most famous names in the history of the iron and steel making industry of Wales, including Taitt, Guest, Hutchins, Martin, Crawshay, Bailey, Kennard, Homfray, and Sir Lewis Jones.

The Maritime Community

More than 2,000 men mentioned in these lists had a strong maritime connection. In Wales, and elsewhere, Freemasonry provided a welcome for such men from far and wide. Despite the subsequent travels of these men, lodge membership continued to be an important, and, in some cases, life-long, part of their existence. At least 50 of these men were travellers from elsewhere, who joined Masonic lodges in Wales - not only out of the need for a social life and companionship

during their stay in the country, but also as a part of their integration into the local community - because in many cases they settled down and became permanent residents.

The strength of the attachment to Freemasonry felt by these men is demonstrated in a number of ways, for example by the way that in many cases they retained their membership of lodges for very long periods after joining and after moving to another part of the world. While this feature has been noted within other occupational groups, it was much more highly pronounced within the maritime community than others and it supports the views of other historians who have looked at the global development of the British Empire, as well local studies focused for example on mining and shipping in Cornwall.⁶⁶ It is clear that these men cherished membership of their lodge, despite living far away for much of their life and, quite probably, it also afforded them the opportunity to make new friends and meet old acquaintances within lodges in England and overseas, on their travels.

Mining and Quarrying

The important part which mining, quarrying, and minerals have played in Welsh life over the past two centuries is widely reflected in the annual returns submitted by Masonic lodges to their local Clerk of the Peace. These records mirror the fact that the search for and exploitation of coal has been the dominant feature of this economic activity but it has also included the exploitation of lime,⁶⁷ gravel,⁶⁸ stone,⁶⁹ sand,⁷⁰ silica,⁷¹ slate,⁷² iron ore, and lead, as well as gold⁷³. Closely connected with this was the conversion of coal into coke and the sourcing and importation of additional minerals.

⁶⁶ J. Harland-Jacobs, *Builders of Empire: Freemasons and British Imperialism 1717-1927*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); J. W. Daniel, *Masonic Networks & Connections*, (London: The Library and Museum of Freemasonry, 2007); R. Burt, *Miners, Mariners & Masons*, (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2020).

⁶⁷ Trevor Moses of Risca, Manager of a Lime Works, who in 1896 was listed as a member of Homfray Lodge No. 1562 (1562/1896/31) and Hubert Norton of Swansea, a Director of a Lime Works, who in 1946 was listed as a member of Penrice Lodge No. 4172 (4172/1946/38).

⁶⁸ Albert Edward Williams of Wrexham, manager of a gravel company, who was listed throughout the 1950s as a member of Square and Compass Lodge No. 1336 (1336/1950/23) and Alfryn John of Kenfig Hill, a gravel merchant, who in the 1960s was a member of Venables Llewellyn Lodge No. 3756 (3756/1962/71).

⁶⁹ Robert Price of Abergavenny, a stone merchant, recorded in 1897 as a member of Philanthropic Lodge No. 818 (0818/1898/53); and J.C. Taylor a stone quarry secretary, who in 1927 was a member of Square and Compass Lodge No. 1336 in Wrexham (1336/1927/95).

⁷⁰ William Perryman of Kingsteignton, South Devon, a sand and stone quarry owner, who in the 1950s was a member of Aberpennar Lodge No. 6354 (6354/1954/52).

⁷¹ Reginald Jones of Wrexham, a silica quarry manager, who in 1947 was a member of Square and Compass Lodge No. 1336 (1336/1962/46) and David Stephens of Kidwelly, a silica quarry manager, who was recorded in 1888 as a member of Cambrian Lodge No. 464 (0464/1888/23).

⁷² Thomas Rees of Pembroke Dock, a slate merchant, who was recorded in 1900 as a member of Loyal Welsh Lodge No. 378 (0378/1901/91). R. Price Evans of Bettwsycoed, manager of a slate quarry, and from 1937 to 1962 a member of St Grwst Lodge No. 4741 (4741/1937/58).

⁷³ Thomas Waldon Williams, a gold mine official, whose address was Ashanti Akim, West Africa when recorded between 1941 and in 1944 as a member of Venables Llewellyn Lodge No. 3756 in Porthcawl (3756/1944/129).

UNLAWFUL SOCIETIES ACT

Freemasons recorded in the surviving lodge annual returns who were engaged in the supply of various ores number more than 1,310 people. They were employed in many roles within this industry and clearly highlight the fact that the fraternity - for most of its history - was a recreation chiefly for people with money and status. While the owners of mines and quarries formed a small part of the total population of the principality they occupied a much more significant and large element within the group of 1,300 Freemasons who were engaged in the mineral industry. At least 110 of these men were owners of these valuable natural reserves. In addition to the proprietors of mines and quarries, the records also identify five company directors and twenty-six mine inspectors.

Although there was a disproportionate number of owners among the ranks of the Freemasons engaged in this industry, by far the largest group of people consisted of men in management roles. They were described in the records as agents, managers, surveyors, engineers, accountants, and similar terms. Management functions were filled by at least 830 Freemasons engaged in mineral production. That is more than eight times as many as the 104 men registered as foremen and labourers. The latter were described variously as overmen, overseers, foremen, weighmen, hitchers, miners, colliers, winding enginemen, coal trimmers, and masons. There is little doubt that lack of time and money must have played a major part in explaining this social imbalance.

Closely connected to those responsible for extracting minerals from the ground were those involved in the distribution of various ores. These men were mainly described as exporters, shippers, merchants, and sales agents, for example. They accounted for 220 of the 1,310 people. In addition, allied trades, such as pitwood merchants,⁷⁴ and safety lamp manufacturers,⁷⁵ can also be found among the occupations listed in this section.

The lodge annual returns provide a useful insight into the way in which men progressed during their working life from place to place⁷⁶ and from occupation to occupation,⁷⁷ and this is especially true in this category. For example, some moved to places beyond their initial place of residence to other more distant parts of the United Kingdom⁷⁸ while others moved to work

⁷⁴ John Cumming Evans of Swansea, a pit wood merchant, who in 1940 was described as a member of Indefatigable Lodge No. 237 (0237/1940/33); and Ernest Crook Brabyn of Cardiff, a pit wood Foreman, who in 1909 was listed as a member of Bute Lodge No. 960 (0960/1909/18).

⁷⁵ Lewis Noah Williams of Aberdare, a safety lamp manufacturer, who in 1889 was in a member of St David's Lodge No. 679 (0679/1889/62).

⁷⁶ Richard Haydock of Bryncethin, a member of Ogmere Lodge No. 1752 (1752/1884/30) and a mining agent, who moved to Barnsley in Yorkshire where he became a colliery engineer in 1884, and John Thomas Green of Tredegar, a member of St George's Lodge No. 1098 who moved to Abercarn in 1881, Newbridge in 1893 and Bristol in 1897.

⁷⁷ Entry 0679/1888/24, and 0679/1890/21 and 0679/1895/12 (from chemist to licensed victualler to auctioneer).

⁷⁸ Harold Starr of Nantyllyllon, a colliery engineer, who moved to Linby in Nottinghamshire to become a mines inspector, according to the 1957 annual return of Maesteg Lodge No. 6805; and Herbert Charles Gardner a colliery manager of Llanbradach, who moved to Ashton-under-Lyne in 1945/56 and then to Swinton in 1956, as recorded in the annual returns of Henry Pendrill Charles Lodge No. 3769.

overseas in the mining industry, in India,⁷⁹ Africa⁸⁰ and North America⁸¹. After the nationalisation of the coal industry in 1947, relocation to London was especially noticeable when opportunities arose for men to take up wider-area responsibilities within the industry.⁸² Nationalisation and its effects was certainly one of the major features of these records but so too was the wave of mechanisation which took place in the later period, and we find many men registered as engaged in instructing others in the use of new machinery underground.⁸³

A curious feature to be found in the annual returns, and not limited to this group of workers, is the way in which the address given for some of these men is quite often their place of work rather than their home address.⁸⁴ It is interesting that they felt no reluctance in seeking to have Masonic correspondence sent to their place of employment. During the 1980s and 1990s, when many attempts were made to identify the place of employment of Freemasons, this would have been even more remarkable.⁸⁵ Owing to a lack of information, one can only speculate upon the reasons for the decision to withhold a home address in such cases.

Agriculture and Forestry

Agriculture and forestry, as two of the most traditional Welsh industries, provided employment for at least 696 of the men whose lives are partly portrayed in the surviving lodge annual returns. Their activities are recorded as the rearing of sheep, dairy cows, beef cattle, pigs, and poultry, as well as the growing of corn, fruit, and (overseas) tea and rubber. Their geographical spread (by modern Masonic Province)⁸⁶ was as follows:

South Wales	288 men in 47 lodges	Total population 943,019
North Wales	176 men in 21 lodges	Total population 493, 181
Monmouthshire	126 men in 17 lodges	Total population 292,317
West Wales	96 men in 15 lodges	Total population 284,300

⁷⁹ Joseph Harold North, colliery manager, whose address was given as Singarern Collieries, Deccan in the annual return submitted by St George's Lodge No. 1098 in 1905 (1098/1905/78).

⁸⁰ Jenkin Thomas, a mining engineer, whose address was given as Twiga Mine, Chumya, Tanganyika, East Africa in the annual return submitted by Afan Lodge No. in 1944 (0833/1944/210).

⁸¹ Thomas Jenkin Lewis, a mining engineer, whose address was given as Scranton, USA in the 1926 annual return submitted by Llynfi Lodge No. in 2965 (2965/1926/3).

⁸² Cyril Austen Smale of Wrexham, a member of Yale Lodge No. 5636, who was described as a deputy area scientist in the lodge annual returns during the 1950s; Albert Edward Matthews of Penarth, who was described as an NCB Marketing Officer the annual returns of Windsor Lodge No. 1754 during the 1950s.

⁸³ Alfred Wilfred Eastman of Bargoed, who was described as a mechanisation officer in the annual returns of Gelligaer Lodge No. 6298 during the 1950s, and Gwynfryn George of Abertridwr, a member of St Ilan Lodge No. 6624, a mechanisation demonstrator in the mid-1960s.

⁸⁴ Henry Arthur Griffin of Cardiff, described as a coal manager, whose address in the 1909 annual return of Bute Lodge No. 960 was c/o Cory Brothers; and Thomas Gilbert Evans of Merthyr, whose address was recorded as The Public Offices in the 1909 annual return of Loyal Cambrian Lodge No. 110 in 1902.

⁸⁵ P. R. Calderwood, *This Chequered Existence, a history of Freemasonry in the Twentieth-century 1900-1999*, (Shepperton, Lewis Masonic, 2021), 155-173.

⁸⁶ The Masonic Province of North Wales comprises the historic counties of Montgomeryshire, Merionethshire, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Caernarfonshire and Anglesey. The Masonic Province of South Wales, Eastern Division, consisted of Glamorganshire, Brecknockshire and Radnorshire. The Masonic Province of South Wales, Western Division, covered Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire and Cardiganshire. In 2008, the Eastern and Western Divisions were renamed as South Wales and West Wales respectively.

For an essentially local industry, a surprising number of these men had foreign addresses and/or occupations, connected with farming overseas, including John William Evans, a fruit farmer, living in British Columbia, Canada who was recorded as a member of Barry Lodge No. 2357 from 1920 to 1925, and J Samuel Best, a tea plantation owner, whose address was Assam in India, and who was recorded as a member of Bala Lodge No. 1369 in 1914.

Hospitality

The hospitality industry figures strongly in the annual returns and it is represented by 1,412 people, of whom seventy belonged to more than one lodge. This significant presence underlines the strong connection with inns and hotels which has existed since the start of organised Freemasonry in 1717, when the first meeting of the Premier Grand Lodge was held at The Goose and Gridiron public house near St Paul's Cathedral in London. During the nineteenth century, lodge meetings were held at a variety of venues, including inns, taverns, hotels, and restaurants, before many Masonic Halls were built. In Wales, the licensed trade provided employment for 1,100 people, or three-quarters, of the hospitality group mentioned above. Not surprisingly, many publicans became members of the lodges which they hosted, like Thomas Davies, landlord of The Bush Inn at Merthyr Tydfil, and, in many cases, they would act as a steward or tyler.⁸⁷ It was a relationship of mutual benefit, with many publicans and brewers and their staff, as well as club stewards, becoming lodge members.

Lodge returns provide numerous reminders of the days before the big brewery owners, when landlords brewed their own beer and were described variously as a brewer, maltster or innkeeper. They also remind us of the complicated arrangements that at one time existed, with 'tied houses' and pub managers, answerable to brewers and their agents.⁸⁸ While the lists provide many examples of village and small town brewers and maltsters, there is also mention of some of the larger brewery companies that served a much wider area, exemplified by men such as Samuel Arthur Brain, founder of Brains Brewery of Cardiff, which was described as Wales' leading brewery, and Colin Wynford Jones, a director of The Ely Brewery Company.⁸⁹ Examples of the many small town brewers include Robert Baker of The Sun Brewery in Llangollen,⁹⁰ and William Henry Howell, Manager of the Tredegar Brewery, at Risca.⁹¹

The address column of the returns regularly outlines how licensees were obliged or chose to move home on a frequent basis. For example Robert Henry Owen – a member of Loyal Cambrian Lodge No. 110 (1890-1909) – who was the proprietor of The Bush Hotel at Dowlais from at least 1896 until he moved to The York Hotel at Bridgend in 1901. He then went to Swansea in 1906, where he was licensee at three hotels in quick succession, namely The Cricketers' Arms in 1906, The Wyndham Hotel in 1908, and The Criterion Hotel in 1909.

⁸⁷ J. Fraser, *The Illustrated history of Loyal Cambrian Lodge No 110*, (Merthyr Tydfil: H.W. Southey and Son Ltd, 1914), 69.

⁸⁸ Entry 6169/1960/16.

⁸⁹ Entry 3979/1948/186.

⁹⁰ Entry 1336/1899/56.

⁹¹ Entry 1562/1897/47.

In a sector where change and upheaval were so frequent, Freemasonry appears to have been one of the few constants in the busy life of those engaged in the hospitality sector, as the length of the connection demonstrates in many cases, like Robert Margrave, a wine merchant of Llanelly, who was recorded as a member of Talbot Lodge No. 1323 for more than 46 years (1873-1919). The reasons for holding on to membership could have been not only sentimental and to do with old friendships but they might also have provided help to men in returning to their roots, if things did not work out at their new place of work. It is also noticeable that for some men Freemasonry offered a fast means of assimilation into their new host community. Examples of the latter include James Cyrus Thomas, licensee of The Mackintosh Hotel in Merthyr Vale, who in 1905 was recorded as a member of Fforest Lodge No. 2606. He moved home in 1908 to become the proprietor of a hotel near Crickhowell and he immediately joined the local St John's Lodge No. 818, of which he remained a member until at least 1916.

Retailers

The dismissive comment, ascribed to Napoleon I, that Britain was 'a nation of shopkeepers' at the end of the eighteenth-century, might have been applied with equal force to Freemasonry throughout the following 170 years. During that period, the merchant class - especially shopkeepers - comprised by far the largest employment group within Freemasonry in Wales. The lodge annual returns reflect this striking feature, revealing that at least 4,200 men were shopkeepers of one type or another. As a percentage of the total membership of Freemasonry, the figure for retailers remained remarkably steady between 1799 and 1968 and, surprisingly, it was somewhat higher in the earlier period. Indeed, the figures show nothing to support the conventional view that Freemasonry became more socially inclusive in modern times. In presenting the actual figures as follows, it is acknowledged that they are based solely on the documents which have survived but, even though the survival rate for the earlier documents is poorer, nonetheless the constancy of the percentage figures is striking and interesting.

The entries illustrate - in personal terms - a number of major economic and social trends, such as the emergence of new technologies eclipsing old ways, the decline of small businesses, and the rise of chain stores, as well as the replacement of some traditional financial lifelines. In each of these areas, and in others, social transformation is brought to life by individual life stories. The lodge returns illustrate how traditional occupations such as saddlers and harness-makers, like Oliver Evans of Aberdare, adapted to changing trade patterns in the twentieth century and became suppliers of leather goods and sports equipment providers. Similarly, they show how the piano dealers of the 1880s changed, in response to market demands towards the end of the Victorian era, to become more diversified sellers of music in many other forms. The introduction and growing popularity of bicycles saw the emergence of a new stream of retailers keen to exploit fresh markets. The same process can be seen at work later, as the arrival and sale of radio and television equipment⁹² created new ways to make a living and as a widening range of electrical goods⁹³ came into vogue. Better and lower cost refrigeration bought in new

⁹² Entry 1098/1961/123.

⁹³ Entry 0671/1957/5.

opportunities, enabling Fruiterers like Francis Elliott of Cardiff,⁹⁴ and other traditional food suppliers, to take up new commercial opportunities as frozen food distributors after the Second World War.

In addition, the lodge returns illustrate the strength and importance of family businesses, especially in the earlier period, and their gradual replacement by large organisations, controlling a chain of stores. Terms such as shop proprietor, owner, and director can be found quite commonly in the nineteenth century lodge annual returns, but in the following century they were overtaken by terms such as store or branch manager, reflecting the changing pattern of ownership in retail industries.

Foremost among the new class of retailers in Wales were the Co-operative Stores, F. W. Woolworths, W. H. Smith, and Star Supply Stores.⁹⁵ The growth of such organisations entailed greater geographical mobility for those engaged in the business, with the rise, for example, of store managers,⁹⁶ area managers,⁹⁷ stores inspectors,⁹⁸ and managing secretaries⁹⁹ as well as staff trainers, like Reginald Clark of Colwyn Bay.¹⁰⁰ Many of these men were called upon to move from store to store in an ever-widening pattern.

The lodge returns chart the rise and fall of the pawnbroking industry in Wales, an activity of profound importance to the working classes and poorer members of Welsh society, who found access to the benefits of the traditional banking industry difficult until the second half of the twentieth century. Not far removed from the activity of the pawnbrokers were the credit drapers (an early example of hire purchase) who also flourished in Wales in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and who were an important part of Welsh Freemasonry.

The Lodges

As well as information about individuals, the returns that were made to Quarter Sessions also tell us a great deal about the state of lodges. Since 1717, almost four hundred Masonic lodges have been formed in Wales and Monmouthshire. The eighteenth century was an especially hard time for many of these lodges and of the twenty-four that were formed in Wales during the 1700s only seven were still in existence in 1799. Six of the seven lodges ceased to meet within 12 years of the legislation being introduced and all 24 had ceased to exist by 1829 (regrettably no annual returns for any of them have been traced). It is interesting to consider whether the Act accelerated their closure.

That possibility is strengthened when one considers that the total number of Welsh lodges lost during the subsequent 157 years of the life of the Act was only fifteen. Although the Act was not intended to affect Masonic lodges adversely, it nonetheless appears to have had a negative effect since so many of the legacy lodges in Wales vanished so rapidly. Their demise

⁹⁴ Entry 5997/1953/67.

⁹⁵ Entry 3756/1936/34.

⁹⁶ Entry 4172/1941/161.

⁹⁷ Entry 4533/1962/59.

⁹⁸ Entry 3977/1926/97.

⁹⁹ Entry 3979/1942/194.

¹⁰⁰ Entry 2569/1949/63.

may also have been influenced by what historian Michel Brodsky described as “the publication of two widely circulated and popular books which had falsely but squarely put the responsibility of the French Revolution on Freemasonry: Barruel *Memoire pour servir a l’histoire du Jacobinisme*, and Robison *Proofs of a conspiracy against all the religions and governments of Europe*. Both had enormous influence and were published in London in 1797 and 1798.”¹⁰¹ The climate of political repression that was created by the Unlawful Societies Act and similar legislation appears to have placed destructive pressures upon these lodges -which is all the more remarkable for Wales - a part of Britain that had such strong radical traditions.

Between 1799 and 1967, a further 262 lodges were formed in Wales. Annual returns for 141 of those lodges have survived, although a complete set does not exist for any of these lodges. When the legislation was repealed in 1967 the number of lodges still in existence in Wales was 248. Together, these annual returns reveal an interesting pattern of lodge growth and contraction. The number of lodges in Wales and Monmouthshire rose from seven in 1799 to reach thirty-eight by 1874 when the Prince of Wales became Grand Master, and grew under his administration to sixty-seven by 1901. Between 1901 and 1937 the number of lodges in Wales rose further to 136, aided strongly by the increased involvement of the Royal Family in the organisation. Between 1937 and 1950 the total number of lodges in Wales and Monmouthshire rose from 136 to 194, again assisted by the postwar search for comradeship. This pattern was maintained throughout the next two decades, as rising prosperity brought Masonic membership within the financial reach of many working-class men.¹⁰²

The size of each lodge varied widely across Wales, but the returns show that in 1808 the average size of a lodge was less than eighteen members, so a typical lodge meeting must have been a cosy gathering, especially since several members would have been absent for unavoidable reasons. By 1839 this figure for average lodge size had risen to fifty-five and fell to fifty-two by 1860, a period marked by claims of poor administration by Grand Lodge.¹⁰³ Recovery was apparent by 1874, when the size of the average Welsh lodge had risen to seventy five. In that year the fortunes of the organisation took an upward turn but the steady growth of the fraternity was evidenced more clearly by the establishment of many new lodges.

The growth which the organisation experienced from the middle of the First World War onwards was made clear by the figures for Wales in 1916 and 1926 when the average membership figures for lodges were 92 and 121 respectively. The 1930s saw further growth but it was chiefly in the number of lodges rather than the average size of lodges. Postwar expansion was again illustrated after 1945 - partly by the stability of the number of members within each lodge, which stood at 125 in 1938 and 122 in 1948 - but more clearly by the rapid increase in the number of new lodges established.

Remarkably, ten lodges grew to encompass more than 200 members. The first to do so was Bute Lodge No. 960 in Cardiff. The surviving annual returns show that this happened in

¹⁰¹ M. Brodsky, ‘Why was the Craft de-Christianised?’ *AQC* Vol. 99 (1986), 157.

¹⁰² P. Calderwood, *Freemasonry and the Press in the Twentieth Century*, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 197.

¹⁰³ A.N. Newman, *Some Masonic Musings, a collection of papers on the subjects of Craft and Mark Freemasonry*, (Shepperton, Lewis Masonic, 2021) 118.

1882. Eight of the other lodges which attracted a membership of over 200 were also in South Wales and they peaked between 1921 and 1953.

What do the annual return documents tell us about the social composition of Freemasonry? The clear pattern which appears in sharp focus in the early documents shows that the organisation embraced men from a wide range of social backgrounds but that it was dominated by men of wealth and the leaders of the local community, supplemented by a few middle-ranking men with clerical ability who provided the essential administrative skills required to be a good secretary, treasurer, or director of ceremonies, plus several men of a lower social status who undertook more menial tasks such as being tyler or steward. Being an organist required musical skills, and come from a mix of backgrounds.

The membership age profile is another area of much speculation but what is clear is that it was an organisation composed principally of men past middle age. A certain amount of wealth has always been a necessity for membership, because of the costs involved, and this inevitably skewed the age profile towards older men, notwithstanding the presence of small number of young men who enjoyed inherited wealth. Freemasonry, throughout its history, seems to have been a hobby that had an especially strong attraction for men as they approached and entered retirement. The term 'retired' for example recurs in the annual returns in well over eleven thousand of the 197,000 entries.

A Case Study

In addition to using the annual returns to outline the profile of Freemasonry across the whole of Wales, these documents can also be used to investigate the structure and vicissitudes of individual lodges and regions. For example, in the Llynfi Valley, in West Glamorgan, forty-two annual returns made by Llynfi Lodge No. 2965 have survived, covering the period from 1904 to 1960. The returns record that Llynfi Lodge began with thirty-two members and climbed steadily throughout the period for which we have annual returns. The lodge saw a considerable rise in membership around the First and Second World Wars, increasing from sixty-one members in 1913 to one hundred by 1921, and by 1948 the membership had risen to 194. It reached its peak in 1953 when it had 228 members

It is especially interesting to note that - notwithstanding the trauma of the General Strike in 1926 - the membership increased between 1923 and 1928 from 107 to 153 (and this included a rise in the number of brethren employed in mining from twelve to twenty-six). At such a time of acute economic difficulty a decline in lodge membership might have been expected, especially in a mining area such as this. It is an intriguing development, observed in other contexts, and probably relates to the social insurance benefits of Freemasonry.

Consistently, the members came from two main groups, those involved in retail and sales and those who were engaged in the professions. Together these two groups made up two-thirds of the membership. However, the coal industry, the largest employer in the Llynfi Valley, never accounted for more than seventeen per-cent of the membership (1926) and at one time it was as low as eleven per-cent (1957).

In coastal towns and large towns, the Welsh annual returns show that the membership of Masonic lodges was drawn not only from the immediate locality but also from much farther afield. This, however, was not true of Llynfi Lodge – at least until after the General Strike. It had an exclusively local membership, drawn from the Llynfi Valley and adjoining areas, for its first 20 years. A small change became apparent in the late 1920s when at least three members went to work in the USA. By the late 1930s the search for work had taken members even further afield, with addresses in Singapore, Rhodesia, and the Gold Coast. During the Second World War members of the lodge were transferred to towns throughout England and Wales (and farther afield) so that by 1955 a third of them were living away from the Valley. The lodge annual returns also provide an opportunity to follow the story of individuals, such as two who sat on opposite sides in the House of Commons.

Vernon Hartshorn (1872 – 1931) was a Welsh trades union leader and Labour Party politician who was initiated in Llynfi Lodge in 1918, and remained a member until at least 1927. Hartshorn was President of the South Wales Miners' Federation, and a member of the National Executive of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain. He served as Member of Parliament for Ogmore from 1918 until his death, having been appointed Postmaster-General and made a Privy Counsellor in 1924 and appointed Lord Privy Seal in 1930.

Sir William Beddoe Rees (1877–1931), born in Maesteg, was a Liberal politician. As an architect, he designed many Welsh chapels and became President of the National Free Church Council of Wales. Around 1914, he was appointed managing director of Welsh Garden Cities Ltd, a company which built garden villages in some of the industrial valleys of South Wales, for which he was knighted in 1917. He was initiated in Llynfi Lodge in 1918 and later became chairman of a number of companies, mostly in coal mining and associated industries. He was elected to Parliament in 1922 for Bristol South and opposed legislation to establish a minimum wage for coalminers, declaring that it would enable the mineworkers, through their trade unions, to hold the country to ransom.¹⁰⁴ How he and Vernon Hartshorn got along is not known.

The Meeting Places

An overview of the kind of venues that were used for meetings of Masonic lodges is another aspect which emerges from the annual returns. These documents reveal that the most common meeting place for lodges in Wales, especially after their early years, was on Masonic premises. The total number of alternative venues which they listed was just forty-four. Half of these were hotels, a quarter were civic halls, and the last quarter was made up principally of church buildings and miscellaneous venues. They include more than ten civic buildings, such as The Town Hall¹⁰⁵ at Cowbridge and The Council Chambers¹⁰⁶ at Denbigh. Similarly, a number of church and chapel buildings are listed as regular lodge meeting places, such as Calfaria Chapel¹⁰⁷ in Bargoed, and the Baptist Chapel School in Wrexham.¹⁰⁸ An assortment of other public buildings also

¹⁰⁴ *The Times*, 22 June 1923, 14.

¹⁰⁵ See annual returns of Industria Cambrensis Lodge No. 6700 from 1952 to 1965.

¹⁰⁶ See annual returns of Royal Denbigh Lodge No. 1143 from 1875 to 1923.

¹⁰⁷ See annual returns of Gelligaer Lodge No. 6298 from 1957 to 1962.

¹⁰⁸ See annual returns of Square and Compass Lodge No. 1336 from 1941 to 1945.

appear in the documents, including The Temperance Hall¹⁰⁹ at Tredegar, The Railway Station at Welshpool, and The New Arcade Buildings¹¹⁰ in Cardiff.

In Wales, the use of non-Masonic premises was a phenomenon that was largely confined to the late Victorian period, when so many new lodges were being formed. The list of lodges on the register of UGLE doubled from 1,400 to 2,800 between 1874, when the Prince of Wales became Grand Master of the United Grand Lodge of England, and 1901.¹¹¹ It was a period when most of these new lodges were developing the resources to purchase their own premises.

Conclusion

The ups and downs of lodges and the spread of Freemasonry across Wales have become more evident in the course of this study. It has shown that from small beginnings the organisation expanded to become a very substantial group of people in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. From a position in 1800, when there were only seven lodges in the whole of Wales, with a typical membership of eighteen men in each lodge, to a position in 1960 where there were 248 lodges, typically with a membership of three times that number (and some with a membership of over 300) is a remarkable journey, and one that has continued because there are now over 320 lodges in Wales.

In growing at such a pace, the documents show how the lodges needed bigger and more suitable premises than the rooms in hotels, church and town halls where they began life, and the returns show how they established Masonic Halls right across Wales. The consequences and effect upon the architectural landscape of the country have been under-rated so far, and should include substantial care homes for more than a hundred elderly and infirm people built at Porthcawl, Cowbridge and Llandudno.

This analysis of the annual returns confirms and documents the widely-held view that, traditionally, Freemasonry has been especially attractive to the senior people in society and that its social profile has widened in recent times as the distribution of wealth has brought membership of the organisation within the financial reach of more men. It has been especially interesting to read about the many distinguished, and undistinguished, men who have been active and energetic Freemasons, including: judges, generals, politicians, chief constables, bishops, professors, colliery owners, ironmasters, railway promoters, bankers, surgeons, editors, composers, artists, entertainers, and sportsmen. It also included ordinary working men, and most of all shopkeepers. Possibly the most surprising discovery was to find out that shopkeepers and merchants formed the largest group of all. Why this should be is a mystery but perhaps future historians will uncover it. As indicated by the case study that has been provided, the returns also have great potential to illuminate the history of individual lodges and families.

One of the themes which emerged repeatedly throughout this study of the documents was the length of time for which many men held on to their lodge membership and continued to remain members, despite distance and changes of address. These examples highlight the

¹⁰⁹ See annual returns of St George's Lodge No. 1098 from 1867 to 1891.

¹¹⁰ See annual return of Glamorgan Lodge No. 36 for 1860.

¹¹¹ Calderwood, *Freemasonry and the Press*, 197.

important part which Freemasonry played in the lives of such men, especially for travellers, providing continuity and valued links with places and friends, old and new. It is a theme which was also underlined by the high number of men who chose to join additional lodges and hold on to multiple lodge memberships, often in widely separated places.

Similarly, these documents illustrate and inform the economic changes and development of social life in Wales. The decline of traditional means of employment and the rise and adoption of new technologies are just some of the many ways in which these documents record significant changes in the life of the country. Horse-drawn transport gave way to railways, cars, lorries and other forms of transport, including aircraft, while hospitals, universities and schools increased. Iron, steel, shipbuilding and engineering industries grew, and then receded. They also record the movement of people at a personal level and provide much useful information for students of family history. This rich resource is expected to be of great value to family researchers in tracing the movement and associations of their predecessors and the changes that occurred in their lives. The information contained within these scattered documents underline how important it is to rescue and preserve the detailed explanations they can provide, not only in Wales but also in England.

